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Among the great authors

## Living by the pen

Claude Rawson

JOHN LAWRENCE ABBOTT  
*John Hawkesworth: Eighteenth-Century Man of Letters*  
241pp. University of Wisconsin Press. £16.90.  
0 299 08610 0

John Hawkesworth is now largely forgotten. He was once a distinguished figure in literary London, the friend of Johnson, Garrick, Smart, Burney, and Benjamin Franklin. With Johnson, he was a member of that fraternity of professional authors which grew up around Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine* in St John's Gate. He was a lifelong contributor and reviewer to the *Magazine* and succeeded Johnson as, in effect, its literary editor. John Lawrence Abbott exaggerates when he says in his *John Hawkesworth: Eighteenth-Century Man of Letters* that "Hawkesworth served no less than Johnson as a 'literary dictator' of his age", but there is some substance in the claim.

Hawkesworth's relations with Johnson had their ups and downs, but his career was self-consciously formed on Johnson's. *The Adventurer*, his best-known work, was a periodical essay modelled on *The Rambler* and published (with Johnson's active collaboration) as its successor. His oriental novel, *Almorana and Hamet*, bears a similar relation to *Rasselas*. (Asked if he had read Hawkesworth's tale, Johnson is said to have answered, "Not I like the man too well to read his book.") His prose style was modelled on the master's and was sometimes said to be indistinguishable from it. Like Johnson, he was a highly professional man of letters, who, "when he put his mind to a task... quickly effected it" and who believed with Johnson "that no man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money".

He was an all-rounder: journalist, reviewer, editor (in the periodical as well as the learned sense), biographer, translator, poet, man of the theatre, author of fictions and historian of voyages of exploration. He belonged to (and indeed helped to create) what was perhaps the first generation of professional authors who lived by the pen without apology, and who combined literary journalism with more ambitious activities in both the imaginative and the learned spheres. They were the positive flowering of an equation which had previously seemed

possible only in a negative form. A few decades earlier, in 1704, Swift had thrust *Crab Street* and the worlds of literature and learning into that fiercely undifferentiating melting-pot of intellectual depravity, *A Tale of a Tub*. There, a L'Estrange and a Dryden, a Dunton and a Bentley, might be all one, but only to their discredit, and at some cost to factual truth.

Samuel Johnson's career was to turn the tables on all that. He combined all the roles triumphantly and with no loss of self-respect. He disliked Swift, who would perhaps have returned the compliment, though they were in many ways temperamentally alike. But no *Tale of a Tub* would have been possible in 1744, still less in 1754. Careers like Johnson's and Hawkesworth's are partly the proof, and partly the cause, of that. Their circle, long before Johnson's Literary Club with its much more illustrious membership, included poets and hacks and scholars and hoaxers and forgers. Akenside and Savage and Birch and the Bluestocking Elizabeth Carter and the disreputable George Psalmanazar and William Lauder. Some achieved greatness, others retained respectability, the last two sank or had already sunk into disrepute. But the profession of letters which they helped to create, the sense of a proud and talented community, independent of the patronage of lords or parties, whose livelihood came largely from intellectual journalism and publishers' commissions as well as from the imaginative works for which they are now remembered, had come to stay. The upshot, contempt which Swift or Pope were able to lavish, with real moral force, on a degenerate *Crab Street*, was no longer possible. The hauteurs survived in an attenuated and increasingly anachronistic form in Fielding and as late as Byron. But for the most part these lordly accents, which once expressed the aspirations and certainties of a live and confident culture, had narrowed to mere lordliness, the preserve of thin-lipped and dedicated aristocrats like Chesterfield or Horace Walpole.

Unlike most of "the literary world of St John's Gate" today, Hawkesworth and Johnson neither had university degrees nor the support of university employment. Both received honorary doctorates in recognition of their literary labours. In Hawkesworth's case, the degree was a Lambeth Doctorate of Laws, conferred by the

Archbishop of Canterbury, to raise him, as the sour Sir John Hawkins put it unkindly, "above the level of vulgar literati". Such Lambeth degrees were not highly esteemed, but Hawkesworth accepted his gladly enough, and even "attempted, unsuccessfully, to use it to practice law in Doctors' Commons". Johnson seems to have felt it had made him uppity.

critics would accept Abbott's view that Hawkesworth's commentary is better than his text, and he says well that Hawkesworth is "a critic who finds in Swift not sickness, but truth, not disease, but wit".

Hawkesworth is chiefly remembered, if at all, for his *Adventurer*, with its moral essays and oriental tales, and, among students of the eighteenth-

unusual. Hawkesworth's specific examples, Bagshot and Alexander, suggest that he may have been remembering Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*, and Abbott sometimes writes as though his lifetime's reading had been rigorously limited to the Hawkesworth circle. His evaluative standards appear to have been formed in the same confined space; writing of Hawkesworth's friendship and collaboration with Garrick, he speaks of a pairing of "the drama's best performer with one of its most important critics".

Hawkesworth's Garrick years brought forth bawdier adaptations of Dryden's *Amphitryon* and Southerne's *Oroonoko* and an entertainment of his own, *Edgar and Emmeline*. The chapter dealing with this friendship marks an uncharacteristic low in Abbott's biographical narrative. "There is considerable evidence that the two men, and their wives, were on close terms", but for all the "evidence" the account immediately becomes lifelessly speculative ("The Hawkesworths must have been frequent callers... One can imagine that Hawkesworth and his wife were moved...") or stultifyingly limp ("Garrick's friendship with Hawkesworth included those favors that intimates willingly do for one another").

This is the dreariest bit in the book, and I may as well get the rest of the carping done now: at some banalities of critical pronouncement ("While the periodical paper is a modest genre without the scale and grandeur of the epic..."), at ineffectual phrasing (Hawkesworth wrote in "the very midslands of neo-classicism"), at the frequent misprints (the best of which may just possibly not be one, a reference transcribed from an unpublished manuscript, to Hawkesworth's debt to his wife's "purse [or pure?] and unlimited affections").

The book is better than this suggests, and so is the story it tells. I have spoken so far of the Hawkesworth known to students of the periodical essay or of the world of Johnson. It charts the rise of a man of letters in the shadow of Johnson's own rise and without Johnson's genius. But the most interesting and best-told part of the book concerns not Hawkesworth's rise but his fall.

In 1773 Hawkesworth published his

John Hawkesworth, L.L.D., from an engraving by James Watson after the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds

Hawkesworth's chief "scholarly" labours were his editions of Swift's works and letters, and a biography of Swift on which he was helped by Johnson and from which Johnson later drew much when he wrote his own Life of Swift. Abbott reports his common opinion when he says the editions are textually poor, though Abbott's own account of the textual history of *Gulliver's Travels* is derivative and out of date. But most knowledgeable

century novel, for his longer oriental fiction, *Almorana and Hamet*. Abbott plods through these, retelling the stories and pointing out that Hawkesworth meant to amuse but also to instruct. Thus *Adventurer*, No 47, is a "powerful essay" which shows "the common criminal and the great military leader [as] kindred spirits", a juxtaposition which he evidently considers arresting original but which other readers might not find quite so

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Sargent was not given the position; he preferred to work on his own terms. With surprising loyalty to his preference, the book pays laudable homage to that work. In format, sometimes very cleverly, it makes way for the plates, but its weaknesses are poorly represented, whereas the number of portraits is excessive. There are three chapters taken from his portrait of Lincoln (1862-3), each managing to differ from one another with the darkest and worst on the cover of Sargent's pictures, even reproduction, tell a coded story. Cataloguers have to face entries for nearly 3,000 paintings. This amount of work might not completely reveal a biography, but it is a overwhelming proof of what Sargent thought was the point of his painting. This book is only a partial indication of that fact, and as such only of partial value.



## Rhetorical diseases

F. L. Wallis

DORIS LESSING

*The Sentinental Agents in the Volven Empire*  
179pp. Cape. £7.95.  
0 224 02130 3

This fifth volume inaugurates the fourth year of Doris Lessing's continuing home-study course on the *Archives of Canopus in Argos*. Students new and old will be aware that of all the empires ever to spread their starry nets across the seas of space and time, Canopus is the most benevolent and venerable. We have this on the highest authority, the authority of Canopus itself. Of the other dominions mentioned on this course, Sirius is unprincipled and exploitative, Puttiora is degenerate and perverse, while Volven, a rudimentary affair of three to five planets, is clearly all but negligible, an "Empire" to be contained within inverted commas. Thus Klorathy, the Canopean agent whose reports Lessing here presents, reminds us that Volven, its concerns and claims, are questionable. As natives of Shikasta, the planet where everything has gone wrong, the nearest Canopus has ever come to a failure, we need instructions like this. We have even forgotten that Shikasta is a colony, eternally obliged to bountiful Canopus: we know it only as "Earth". We are here to be re-educated; it is all for our own good.

Klorathy the imperial archivist may indeed be imperious. This much we can put down to characterization, and to the internal logic of Lessing's creation. But Lessing is Klorathy, as the first paragraph of this book implies. Klorathy requested a transfer from the unbearable Shikasta, only to be sent out to Volven, not even a possession of Canopus, but "a planet whose dominant feature is the same as Shikasta's: self-destructive dementia." Just so Lessing: mental anguish from Shikasta, Africa to communism, found herself in another patriarchal state, as she explained in *The Golden Notebook*. A subversive impulse drove her, once she had been elected to a secure seat in the parliament of English Literature, to subscribe to the radical manifesto of science fiction. Unwillingly she then sought out the most authoritarian of SF's traditional modes, the chronicle of

galactic empire. She may still be capable of appreciating the irony of her choice; if so she no longer shows it. Formerly Lessing offered keen appraisals of the insidious seductions of orthodoxy; now she has relaxed, and is merely orthodox. To be orthodox is to be incapable of irony, it seems.

Irony Lessing would now identify as a figure of Rhetoric, and dismiss. The "Sentinental Agents" are the people Klorathy is on Volven to combat, and they all depend on Rhetoric, are addicted to it, suffer from it like a virus. William Burroughs, possessed of similar socio-linguistic insights, infiltrated the Empire of Signs armed with several explosive devices. Lessing, as Klorathy, sets up "Hospitals for Rhetorical Diseases" where ideologues can be cured, taught to speak properly. Woeful are the effects of "the lying Rhetoric of invaders" from other empires, the Sirians for example.

Miserable exploited populations, refused any means of protesting, have to listen to the channelling of self-praise of the Sirians and their local captive minds. Anyone who tries to use language accurately to describe what is happening vanishes into torture rooms and prisons or, diagnosed as mad, into mental hospitals.

It no longer occurs to Lessing that the same charge can, must, be brought against Klorathy himself, buzzing from planet to planet confining sentimental agents to his own secret "hospitals" the minute they start speaking of Freedom, History and Destiny, of throwing off chains. Only Klorathy may use a phrase like "miserable exploited populations" and get away with it.

Lessing's automatic identification with those persecuted for using language "accurately" is a reflex which is saddening in such a writer, because it is no longer appropriate, no longer true. There is no such thing as "accurate" language; only greater and lesser degrees of artifice. Science fiction, with its multiplying stock of imaginary and artificial things, is a cornucopia of devices for the fabulist. Unfortunately its imperial theme also attracts authors who have ceased to examine myths and are looking for somewhere to establish and enforce them, somewhere unlike the recalcitrant real world.

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MICHAEL JOSEPH

## Tragedy on the A4

Galen Strawson

DEBORAH MOGGACH

*Porky*  
236pp. Cape. £7.95.  
0 224 02948 7

*Porky* is a slight and intentionally graceless work in three parts (the first two are particularly abrasive; the reader is hectoringly you-ed, rhetorically questioned, mock-commanded). But it manages to deal convincingly with the old tragic theme of incest none the less. And, in so doing, it does provide one more refutation of that theory of tragedy, sometimes attributed to Aristotle, according to which the tragic hero must be admirable and impressive - or at least a person of some consequence. Tragedy can flourish in what is small and sorry, insignificant and squalid; indeed it may well achieve its highest forms in mean, undramatic settings. Nor is Aristotle (or "Aristotle") right to suggest that tragedy requires some error of judgment on the part of the hero or heroine. Mere accident, or unavoidable lack of information, can suffice. Seduction by a parent does the trick just as well.

Heather - Porky because of her pale eyes, and because her father keeps a few pigs - grows up in a tatty bungalow on the A4, opposite the Heathrow perimeter fence, not far from the main runway. She watches the travestied countryside around her house disappear patchily under stop-over hotels and petrol stations. Her father wheels and deals, feebly; her mother works as a cleaner in Terminal Two. A

pillow isn't enough to drown their squabbles; Heather learns to fold her ears back on themselves first, and hum. Sometimes her mother walks out on them for a couple of days.

When Heather is ten, her mother spends a month in hospital before giving birth to a son. Later she leaves for a longer period, and Heather is forced into responsibility for the baby. During these absences incest escalates, from rough "I didn't mean to" kisses to coition when she is twelve. Her father is clumsy, remorseful, guilty. Desperate to hold things together, anxious to please, Heather is (as recent and proliferating case studies show) just the type of girl most vulnerable to incestuous advances.

Growing up, she leaves school early, goes on the pill, gets a job packing airline lunches, learns French from cassettes and succeeds in becoming an air hostess, slipping the while into small-scale promiscuity - promiscuity which is an unconscious bid for normality, a hopeless attempt to efface the fatal sexual imprint of her father in her body.

The sense of guilt grows slowly in the girl. The best feature of this novel is Deborah Moggach's success in conveying the complexity of the effects of gradually consummated incest, the scope of childish incomprehension, the patchy character of Heather's stop-start evolution into fully-fledged trauma which leaves her wholly incapable of believing that anyone could ever really love her. There is nothing dramatic in this incest, no catastrophic forcing. The father is always gentle with his daughter. When he subsides from orgasm to sobs, she is too terrified by the strangeness of her father in this state, too anxious for him

to become recognizable again, to be able to fear or understand him. The sense of wrong is undercut by trust. She is remarkably - implausibly - ignorant of sexual matters. She loves her father, and desires contact with him. These things are not simply destroyed; instead they are steadily undermined by the malignant growth of incest.

But the growth of incest is slow, by a compelled complicity. She is forced into collusion with her father both by her continuing love for him, her sense of the need to look after him in her mother's absence, and, when her mother returns, by her pitiable desire to maintain the forms of normality, to achieve a false stability under pressures that are preserved in equilibrium partly by the fact that she cannot afford to acknowledge incest. Disguist at her father and the appalling language of his passion - personifying his penis, he emits a vile mixture of inept childish endearments and wheedling narrative immunities as he develops "bubbles" - come slowly and piecemeal: it is simply inappropriate at the tea-table one day; her father is a kind man. What she to do?

All this is well conveyed. In tragedy is made plain. It lies in the effect of the incest - Heather's complete inability to accept love or return it. But the intentionally of language of the book - a pat, debased demotic, delivered with the schoolgirl verve at a chippy, scrappy, laconic tilt - is very wearing, and it contributes nothing essential to the establishment of mood and character. One regrets the lack of a quieter, more measured construction, for it is treatment of incest is acute and dry true.

## Chipping at the baobab

Roger Owen

DAVID CAUTE

*The K-Factor*  
216pp. Michael Joseph. £8.95.  
0 7181 2260 7

*The K-Factor* is set in Zimbabwe during the violent period between the internal settlement and the election of Robert Mugabe. Its title (K is for Kaffir) is an ironic application of a phrase used by some White Rhodesians, a species for which the author has little sympathy. He shakes his head over their ignorance of the nineteenth century Russian novel in the very first paragraph. David Caute strikes at once that characteristic note of sardonic superiority present in *Under the Skin* - the *Death of White Rhodesia*, his blockbuster of impressionistic reportage which was published earlier this year. *The K-Factor* is in fact a re-working of much of the material of that book.

The theme of both books is the same, namely "the myths, legends, rationalizations and fantasies with which the Whites sustain their view of the world present the larger target, and it is against these that the full force of the author's odium is directed."

The novel tells an action-packed and violent tale with a dazzling display of know-how. Readers will learn the provenance and fire-power of the AK47 rifle; the slang word for a lion leger; the brand names of local cigarettes; the address of Salisbury's best massage parlour, and so on; Caute makes sure that we accept his bona fides. The burden of this information-giving is carried by dialogue. This has the effect of undermining the verisimilitude it seeks to establish, because people keep telling each other things which in reality they wouldn't need to. We are also exposed to some simplified potted history. "Their ancestors had occupied the terrain for centuries," says Caute of the Africans (which is not true as far as the Ndebele are concerned). There is a good deal of highly schematic political debate.

The plot is complicated. Sonia, a rich girl who, during whisky behind the

security fence of her farm. Beyond the fence terrorists and radicalized Jesuits go about their business. Helicopters whirr overhead. Bizarrely, in these circumstances, Sonia discusses feminism with her lesbian lover from London and attempts to seduce her other house-guest, who, even more bizarrely, is a young, black, sophisticated Marxist (he uses words like "re-ify") and a local boy at that. Bewilderingly, even for one whose behaviour is so deviant, Sonia persists in bandying around words like "munt" and "kaffir" in the political colloquies which ensue. These usages he in turn accepts, with inexplicable *sans froid*. Perhaps these exchanges are supposed to indicate some extraordinary degree of liberation and unconventionality on the part of both of them. But the meaning is murky, and the situation improbable.

The story turns on the abduction of Sonia's baby by the blacks. It seems, however, that this might be a fantasy object, the function of which is to legitimize White indignation, and therefore a product of "false consciousness". We have to remind ourselves that white and black babies were really murdered, and that there were grounds for indignation on both sides. There is also a rape scene - not almost mandatory in novels about Africa - in which Sonia's "false consciousness" might again be at work. The black guerrilla leader has an "enormous penis". Is it a real one? Is its enormity imagined? The combination of this kind of puzzle with strong surface naturalism poses some difficulties.

But it is the partiality of the author's sympathies which damages the book most seriously. A savage white policeman who arrests a terrified black "smiles like Jesus on a biscuit tin"; the is the sardonic note reserved for whites. "Another swing of the axe at that great baobab tree Zimbabwe," comments the author. That is the exaggerated and sentimental note reserved for black nationalism. The very word "Zimbabwe", in its present usage, is itself a piece of myth-making. And certainly the poetry it refers to evokes no images of gnarled solidity.

## The Journey

The sun had not gone down. The new moon

Rose alongside us, set out as we did:

Grateful for this bright companionship

We watched the blade grow sharp against the night

And disappear each time we dipped:

A silver of illumination at the crest

Awaited us, a swift interrogation

Showed us the shapes we drove towards

And lost them to the intervening folds

As our way descended. It was now

To leap from side to side, surprising us

At every fresh appearance, unpredictably

Caught among the attacks of some right-hand tree

Or sailing left over roof and ridge

To mock us. I know the explanation

But explanations are less compelling than

These various returns and the expectancy that can

Never quite foreseen the way

The looked-for will look back at us

Across the deviousness of distances that keep on

Lapsing and renewing themselves under a leaping moon.

Charles Tomlinson

## Politics without precedent

Samuel H. Beer

WAYLAND KENNET (Editor)

*The Rebirth of Britain*  
25pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12 (paperback, £5.95).  
0 297 78177 4

RALF DAHRENDORF

On Britain

200pp. British Broadcasting Corporation, £6.95 (paperback, £2.95).  
0 563 20037 5

HUGH STEPHENSON

*Claret and Chips: The Rise of the SDP*  
20pp. Michael Joseph. £8.95 (paperback, £2.95).  
0 7181 2189 9

IAN GILMOUR

*Britain Can Work*  
26pp. Oxford: Martin Robertson. £8.95.  
0 85520 571 7

The run-up to a general election is hardly the time for deep thinking about British politics. It is not infrequently the occasion to voice grievances. So this foreign observer may appropriately preface his comment on these books with a complaint, a nostalgic complaint.

The young cannot imagine what a comfort it was to study British politics thirty years ago. Britain then was the model of stable democracy in the West whose politics allowed nothing to happen for the first time and relieved the lecturer of the need constantly to refresh his notes with new research in order not to be caught out by events. Today, however, "volatility" reigns in a process that continually produces outcomes that are "unprecedented".

Consider the fluidity, not to say frivolity, of public opinion over the past four years. In 1979 Mrs Thatcher

came out on top with forty-four per cent of the vote. In little more than a month Labour had moved back into the lead in the polls and by November 1980 was winning fifty per cent of the public's support. A year later, a new force, the Liberal/Social Democratic Alliance, had captured almost as large a portion of the prospective vote - forty-four per cent - leaving the Conservatives with only twenty-seven per cent, a new low for them. Then, after the Falklands victory of June 1982, Mrs Thatcher led her party to a new high of fifty-two per cent, "a lead", commented *The Economist*, "unprecedented for any modern government three years into its period of office". I ask: what has happened to John Bull, that figure of phlegm and moderation, who used to dominate the political scene and reassure the imprudent lecturer?

For students of politics the question of the hour is whether the old political mould has been broken. Peter Jenkins sketches what he calls "the crumbling of the old order" in his contribution to the Social Democratic symposium, *The Rebirth of Britain*. He starts from "the classic age of two party government", 1945-65. Those were the days when Britain, like other Western countries, discovered "the end of ideology".

Politics was not adversary, but consensual, as the two big parties converged in what they proposed to do and even more in what they actually did when in power. In the mid-1960s I was thought a bit eccentric for saying that in spite of this convergence certain fundamental differences still divided them. A commoner view was, in the late R. T. MacKenzie's words, that "two monolithic structures now face each other and conduct furious arguments about the comparatively minor issues that separate them". As early as 1951 Drew Middleton, freshly arrived in London for the *New York Times*, had reported the general election campaign of that year as "the dull before the lull". This is hardly the way R. W. Apple, Jr sees it for

Americans today. Adversary politics has reached a new peak.

The similarity of views was matched by the stability of support. Squeezing the Liberals towards what seemed certain extinction, the big parties divided the voters into two evenly matched forces whose strength varied little over the years. Looking at the monthly Gallup figures from their start in 1947 to the early 1960s, one sees the party lead for considerable stretches amounting to no more than the statistical margin of error. In the mid-1960s this pattern changed abruptly; the lead between the parties widened, yet also began to shift back and forth more rapidly. The growing propensity for voters to change their minds was also expressed in the surges of strength for the Liberals, on their own in the 1960s and 70s and in recent years as partners in the Alliance. As this vote rose, the share of the total won by the two big parties fell, according to one opinion survey, sinking to fifty-nine per cent in 1981. Recently Robert Wy-brow of Gallup announced that "half the country are now floating voters".

Some see in these changes the promise of "realignment", the implication being that the two-party system will recover its strength as new combatants come to occupy the old shell. That is more than the data suggest. A major ground for "the crumbling" has been the decline of the class/party nexus, abundantly reported and exhaustively analysed since the 1960s. Many will be pleased to see this move away from an electorate "as polarized by class as Britain's has been during the post-war years. These old social divisions, however, were also class bonds and their weakening does not mean that new "ligatures" to use a striking expression of Ralf Dahrendorf's, are emerging to take their place as grounds for party cohesion. On the contrary, the decomposition of class is simply one aspect of that loss of social cohesion which Dahrendorf in *On Britain* sees as

Britain's most serious problem. He tries to suggest remedies, but his portrait of the *anomie* that has supervened upon the traditional civilities of British life is more persuasive than his hopes for the future. Against that background, chances for escape from "realignment" into a restoration of the old order seem slim.

Two striking by-products of this "crumbling of the old order" are the Social Democratic party and Mrs Thatcher. Both defy precedent and the ups and downs of their fortunes caricature volatility.

New parties do arise in Britain, sometimes claiming to be agents of innovation, the Labour Party being the main example in this century. Is this the precedent for the Social Democrats? It is a curious party of innovation, however, that stands for so much that is continuous with the past. When the SDP was launched, *The Times* remarked that at a time when the two main parties had "broken away in different directions from the post-war consensus", this "new beginning" was "seeking essentially to bring that consensus up to date".

If it is continuity for which this splinter from a left-dominated Labour party stands, one should look in a different direction for historical parallels. In British history splits resulting from the challenge of a heightened radicalism have from time to time brought the Tories an accession of strength: Whigs reacting against the ideas of the French Revolution; the business interests that moved out of the Liberal Party as it entered its Radical phase; the drift of other Liberals to the right as the Labour Party gained strength. With regard to many current issues the Social Democrats have much in common with present-day Conservatives: trade union reform; a freer and wider private sector; a more restrictive fiscal and monetary policy. They do not mean to join up with the Conservatives. Neither did the Liberal

Unionists who parted from Gladstone in 1885 and in time contributed half of the new name of the Conservative and Unionist Party. Thinking improbable thoughts, one conjures up the Conservative and Alliance Party of the 1990s.

It would seem, however, that we must leave the Social Democrats where they have chosen to be, viz. in a partnership representing the advanced liberalism which furnished the main ideas, as exemplified by Beveridge and Keynes, for the welfare state not only in Britain, but also in the United States. Indeed, the left-of-centre American who is a bit uncomfortable with proletarian socialism or aristocratic Toryism may well feel most at home in this company. It was on their heritage that Franklin Roosevelt drew when fifty years ago he popularized the term "liberal", which still characterizes the main thrust of the Democratic Party.

Whether or not the past political success of American liberalism is any precedent, the Alliance has raised a standard to and away from which the "dealigned" flood in numbers which at one moment promise the fullness of power, only shortly afterwards to threaten extinction. Hugh Stephenson in *Claret and Chips: The Rise of the SDP* has described the series of near disasters followed by improbable successes by which the SDP has created a national organization, reached agreement with the Liberals, selected their leaders and by now chosen candidates in over 300 constituencies. Their activists embrace a high level of competence, being drawn very largely, as he notes, from the new professional classes. Can they establish enduring links with enough of the "dealigned" to bring into existence what Roy Jenkins calls "a full three party system"? That would be the final crunch that would break the mould of the old order. The present election could answer the question.

To Sir Ian Gilmour, Mrs Thatcher is

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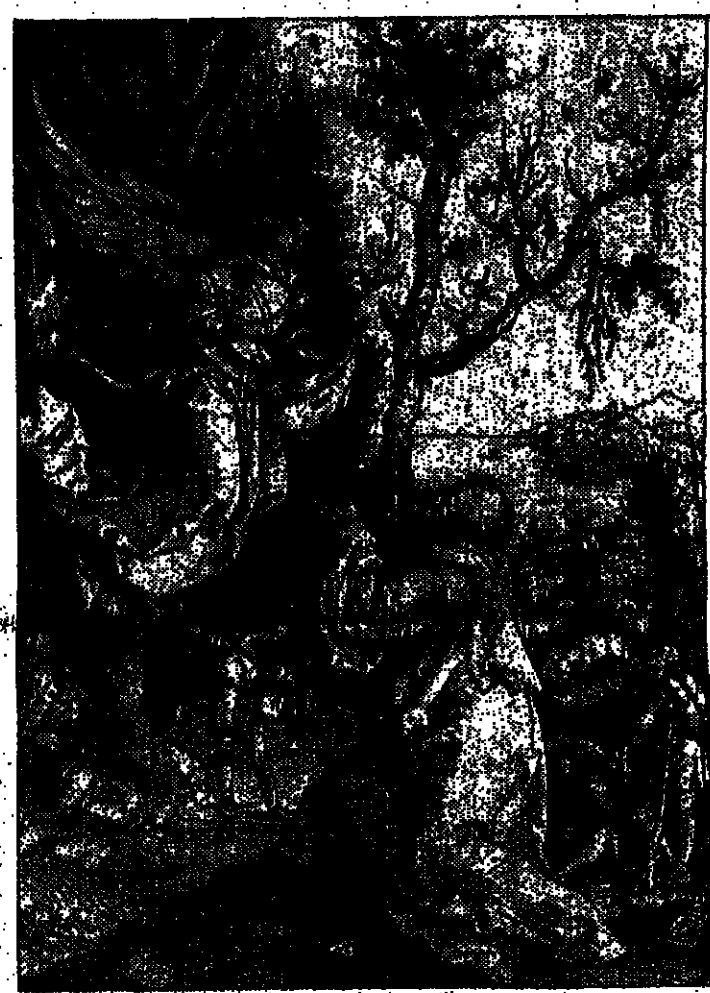
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## Modest reforms

W. H. Walsh

PATRICK RILEY

Kant's Political Philosophy  
213pp. New Jersey: Rowman and  
Littlefield. Edited and with an  
interpretive essay by Ronald Beiner  
TAB\$5. \$28.95.  
0 8476 6763 4

HANNAH ARENDT

Lectures on Kant's Political  
Philosophy: Edited and with an  
interpretive essay by Ronald Beiner  
174pp. Brighton: Harvester. £16.95.  
0 7108 0449 0

Kant's political philosophy is not usually accounted the most profound or exciting part of his system. He felt strongly on a number of political questions, in particular the need for what he called a "republican" constitution, one in which citizens would be consulted or at least considered by rulers and not simply used for forwarding their ends; he was also (and the two issues were closely connected in his mind) an unyielding opponent of war and advocate of a rudimentary league of nations. He not only welcomed the French Revolution, but said of it that it "finds in the hearts of all spectators . . . a wishful participation that borders closely on enthusiasm". Yet he could not bring himself to allow to citizens, even in the most tyrannical conditions, the right to rebel, while his prescriptions for constitutional reform, in particular about what groups should have the franchise, were extremely modest. Kant's detailed knowledge and understanding of political realities, when compared with those of, say, Hegel, were slight. Like other men of the Enlightenment he saw politics from a distance. And this was not surprising, given his status as a professor in a minor university in a remote part of a despotic state.

Patrick Riley does not accept the

conventional verdict: for him Kant is "a political philosopher of the very first rank", "the most important and attractive of political philosophers". Riley does not deny that Kant's political thought had its weaknesses; he just believes that Kant's chief proposal, to institute a politics which is "republican" and "peaceful", is more suited than that of any other political theorist to the needs of the modern world, especially if we set aside the "apocalyptic" and the "over-sanguine". Riley explores Kant's republicanism and his views about peace in two of the central chapters of his book. But his main interest lies not so much in the details of Kant's political philosophy as in the place of political philosophy in the Kantian system. Riley wants to dispute the verdict that it belongs only on the periphery, as a kind of optional extra or dispensable afterthought. Rather, he says, it has a vital part in bridging the gap between nature and freedom: an achievement with which Kant was increasingly preoccupied as time went on.

The case for this conclusion is made through a close examination of certain sections of the *Critique of Judgment*, a work Riley takes to be of crucial importance for Kant's philosophy as a whole. There Kant discourses, among many other things, on "the ultimate end of nature", which turns out to be the attainment by human beings of a state of "culture". Culture in this connection is a condition in which men are not merely masters of the sciences and practitioners or spectators of the arts, but in which, more generally, they have a capacity for "the furthering of ends of all kinds". The capacity to set themselves a wide variety of ends does not in itself elevate men above nature; it does, however, loosen nature's bonds and so prepares the way for self-determination. In this respect it compares with another condition which is alleged by Kant to come about naturally, the attainment of a civil constitution which subjects men's selfish activities to the rule of law. Here

we have the realization of morally desirable ends through the operation of motives which have nothing to do with morality. In both cases nature as it were points beyond itself and in a sense prefigures the sphere of freedom: the absolute opposition between the two is mediated – or so we are led to believe. It is certainly true that the *Critique of Judgment* contains ideas of interest and importance about human life; the passage in the part on aesthetics about the social aspects of art is one example, that to which Riley calls attention another. But Riley does not restrict himself to the exegesis of such passages. His claim is that the third *Critique* really does the trick Kant promised to perform when he wrote it: it shows the critical philosophy to be a genuine unity of a teleological kind. Or rather, it suggests that it may be properly taken in that way, the notion of something super-sensible which underlies and unifies the spheres of nature and freedom being a necessary idea of reason. Kant on this account takes a long step in the direction of Hegelianism, but finally draws back from Hegelian conclusions ("Spirit" remains for Kant an anonymous regulative idea.) If it is a correct account, Riley's work has an interest altogether broader than its title suggests.

However, there are certain caveats to enter. One concerns just what the unitary reading can be taken to have achieved. Riley himself notes that some recent commentators on the *Critique of Judgment*, among them Guyer and McFarland, have treated these particular claims of Kant's with scepticism, if not disdain. He tries to answer their criticisms, but does not

succeed in offering a convincing positive account of his own. Kant can hold that nature and freedom may form a unity; he can perhaps advance as far as saying that we must think that they form a unity. But can he offer any explanation of how the unity is achieved? The answer is of course that the doctrines of the first *Critique* preclude any such explanation. And in its absence a "teleological" reading of the Kantian philosophy, which claims to bring together its theories of nature, art, politics, history and morals, must remain at best interesting; it cannot really convince.

A second caveat touches Riley's particular interests. As shown, he argues that Kant's political philosophy is an integral part of the critical system. Even if that were true it would not of course demonstrate that the details of that philosophy are important; it would certainly not support the large claims Riley makes on its behalf. But in any case it seems doubtful whether Kant does assign much of a mediating role to his philosophy of politics proper; it is his philosophy of history which plays that part. Admittedly, Kant's philosophy of history has a strong political slant to it; it traces the actual and foreseeable fortunes of the human species through what are in effect two main political stages. Interesting as this may be, however, it hardly constitutes a comprehensive theory of politics.

Riley's book is careful and scholarly and touches on many subjects, including fundamental points in Kant's ethics and the value of other books on its general subject. It brings together a lot of information and calls attention to neglected material. But it seems in the end to lack both shape and sustained

drive: the positions argued for are not really made out; in some cases they are not really discussed. It can be recommended as readable, but not much more.

Among the commentators on Kant's political philosophy of whom Riley most approves was the late Hannah Arendt. Her lectures on the subject at the New School for Social Research, given in 1970-71, have now been edited, with an "interpretive" essay, Ronald Beiner of the University of Southampton. They do not bear out Riley's estimate of Kant on politics, since they begin with the round declaration that Kant's actual political writings "cannot compare in quality and depth" with his other works. What interested Arendt was not these, but rather a political philosophy which might have worked out, had he not first come across the ideas when he was old and feeble, a philosophy which might have taken its start from section 4 of the *Critique of Judgment* and would have presented politics, as Kant presented art, not from the point of view of participants but from that of the calm and judicious spectator. What further content that philosophy might have had Arendt does not succeed in communicating, despite some promising forays and acute incidental remarks. The main interest of her book, as her editor makes plain in his admirable commentary, is more in her own work than in Kant's: it is valuable principally for the light it throws on the missing volume of a large-scale idea she did not live to complete. Kant was always an important influence on her thought. But the light she here throws back on his unwritten political theory unfortunately disappointingly dim.

Even in *Utilitarianism* Mill defended a utilitarian theory of moral right. Here he specifically discusses the right to security, whereas in *On Liberty* he discusses the right to liberty, which is grounded in the vital interest of human beings in autonomy. For human beings to flourish, an environment where autonomy and security are protected is essential. The importance of security has been universally appreciated, but why is autonomy so vital?

Mill's Doctrine of Liberty included his theory of the higher pleasures, and the Principle of Liberty was intended to apply only to those in "the maturity of their faculties". Gray claims that Mill's writings on liberty make sense only when one appreciates the developmental and historical dimension of his conceptions of human nature and happiness. Mill's theory rests on two debatable conjectures: about human beings in society, which lead to the conclusion that, for a utilitarian, protection of individual liberty should be paramount. The conjectures are that "mature" human beings in "secure" societies would not be prepared to sacrifice their autonomy for other benefits, and that without a strong right to liberty people cannot become or remain autonomous agents.

Mill had hoped to ground his theory of human nature in an empirical science of ethology, which would reveal the laws of development for the human character. But neither he nor any of his successors has devised an adequate ethological research programme. The theory thus remains untested, and consequently Gray's Principle, whose acceptability he presupposes the truth of the theory, must remain in question. This may be weakness, but at least Mill does emerge as a subtle, systematic thinker, who offers an appealing version of utilitarianism which requires a strong respect for individual liberty itself.

Defenders of the traditional view of Mill as the confused, lapsed utilitarian could no doubt produce textual evidence opposing Gray's thesis. But Gray describes his "forgiveness" Defence, and may be forgiven for concentrating his attention on passages which are especially favourable to his interpretation. It is a great achievement to show that a right through Mill's theme "ruin" is a practical philosophy. After this, those who wish to play "Spot the Howler" with Mill's moral and political philosophy will face a lean time.

MARK TWAIN

Mississippi Writings  
1084pp.  
0940450070

JACK LONDON

Works  
Edited by Donald Pizer  
Volume One: Novels and Stories.  
1020pp. 0940450054

Volume Two: Novels and Social Writings.  
1216pp. 0940450062  
Library of America. \$25 each.

CHARLES N. WATSON

The Novels of Jack London:  
A Reappraisal  
304pp. University of Wisconsin Press.  
£19.99300 X

The Library of America was launched with considerable fanfare a year ago. Echoes of the event reached Europe, but maybe the republication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Leaves of Grass* and the *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, among other titles, did not seem to merit close attention. The revival of classics beyond the protection of copyright, after all, has been a recurrent feature of a publishing scene anxious to invest in the literary equivalent of gilts. Perhaps this was merely another paperback venture pretentiously paraded in hard covers.

Nothing could have been more mistaken. The roots of the Library of America go back at least twenty years and its launching in the spring of 1982 was the triumph of an intellectual and commercial alliance in the face of general apathy and ingrained academic mistrust. The *Journal of the American Academy*, which has been a working lifeline had can-tankrously steered clear of the universities. If the Library of America is in some ways his memorial, it is also the universities' belated and whole-hearted tribute to Edmund Wilson.

Wilson had never been preoccupied with theoretical approaches to criticism. The mark of his style, rather, had been his gusto and width. His task, as he saw it, was to explain the world to America and America to itself. The task was possible, he insisted, because the American and the European intellect spoke a common language. It was an essential task because American achievement might well be the key to the continuity of that internationalism already exploited, in his generation, by Eliot and Pound. Only when he began work on *Patriotic Gore* (1962) did he come to realize how scarce and inaccessible the key texts for American culture were. It was then that he wrote to Jason Epstein to enlist his aid in a commonsensical and typically down-to-earth scheme:

It is absurd that our most read and studied writers should not be available in their entirety in any convenient form . . . The kind of thing I should like to see would follow the example of the *Editions de la Pléiade*, which have included so many of the French classics, ancient and modern; in beautifully produced and admirably printed thin-paper volumes, ranging from 800 to 1500 pages.

He could not have enlisted a better man. Epstein secured foundation backing for the proposed series by orchestrating a chorus of literary approval. Lionel Trilling pronounced the lack of adequate editions of the great American writers "a national disgrace". H. A. Auden added that even in Russia such a situation "would be unthinkable". Those were the days of Camelot. John F. Kennedy was induced to give his presidential blessing, though using an oddly negative phrase, he called the absence of such comprehensive editions "a sad lack of our national culture". B. Lewis (in a fine article published last year in *The New Yorker*) rightly bridled at the phrase.

The Library of America, he argued, was not "some immense gap-filling agency". The literature there to be assembled was the national culture, the many-volumed Bible, as it were, of the national covenant.

Such was the missionary fervour with which the project was launched. The National Endowment for the Humanities (not then so called) got in on the act. But a mysterious sea-change intervened. Quite how, quite when, is not clear. But an undisclosed sum from the Endowment was allotted to the Modern Language Association for its newly created Committee for the Editions of American Authors (CEAA). The Committee's task was to plug a gap. The only full edition of Melville, for example, was still the British Constable edition from the 1920s. There had been no effort to collect a complete Poe since the Virginia edition of 1902. These old texts, in any case, were unreliable. Nor had there been any collected edition of Henry James or Henry Adams at all. Authority, completion, textual scholarship were urgently needed. At the auspices of the CEAA, editorial workshops were set up to produce a series of corporately validated texts by the best contemporary standards.

But if textual scholarship grinds fine, it grinds exceedingly slow. (After decades of labour the Melville consortium has still not reached the masterpiece of his mid-career, *Moby-Dick*.) Also competitive spheres of colonization were darkly plotted, with a forty-volume edition of William Dean Howells proposed here, a complete edition of William Gilmore Sims there. Time was no object. Nor money, it seemed.

Edmund Wilson kept a wary eye on this *trahison des clercs* from Wellfleet. In March 1968 he lost his temper, publishing a celebrated open letter in the *New York Review of Books* which began:

The editing of the classical American writers has got to be an academic racket that is coming between these writers and the public to which they ought to be accessible . . . What we get are, on the one hand, old reprints of various works of these writers, and, on the other, pedantic and expensive editions published at long intervals, a volume or two at a time, by the university presses.

Unabashed he supplied his own interpretation of events; how Endowment money, already earmarked for his project, had been channelled to the Modern Language Association, and news of this that I had. Wilson continued, "was that more of these stupid academic editions were being got under way." A prize example was the grisly news that some M.L.A. beneficiary is going to undertake a complete edition of the works of William Gilmore Sims, who seems to me one of the most unreadable and unwarding American writers – his work is both sloppy and voluminous.

So battle was on. Wilson had thrown down his gauntlet. He challenged the M.L.A. to explain how they had "accomplished this operation of wlaying the funds we were supposed to get". But he was ageing; he fell dispirited. With a final rumble, he merely concluded that he could not "be bothered to do anything about it".

That was a feat, of course. In a two-part article called "The Fruits of the M.L.A." (published in the *New York Review of Books* in the autumn of 1969), he again went into the attack on both the editorial methods and the general literary competence of the M.L.A. In many ways he was on weak ground. Pedantically he laid into the academic pedants. For some reason the noted variants in the *Pléiade* edition of Proust were all right; similar changes (of the names of characters, for instance) in Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* were not. Oblivious of the implications, he ruminated at length on John S. Tuckey's M.L.A. edition of fragments from Mark Twain's final years. (There are some awesome similarities between Wilson's retreat, fighting quixotic battles with the US Treasury and Nabokov from his bunker in Talcottville, and Twain's ultimate gloom and despair.

The M.L.A. not surprisingly, hit back with a pamphlet entitled, *Professional Standards and American Editions: A Response to Edmund Wilson*. The schools stood their ground. Wilson died in 1972. A decade went by until the Ford Foundation, mainly through the efforts of its vice-president, Roger Kennedy, put up \$600,000 to fund what (at that time) was still called the Literary Classics of the United States. For Jason Epstein, now editor-in-chief at Random House, was still on the track. He now rapidly recruited Daniel Aaron, director of the American Civilization programme at Harvard, and Richard Poirier, an editor of *Parisian Review* and professor of English at Rutgers. This self-nominated caucus applied for an additional and larger grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities which was eventually approved in the autumn of 1979. That added \$1,200,000 to the founders' kitty. So the Library Classics went into production to emerge, two and a half years later, with the four pioneer volumes of the renamed Library of America.

The time scale was astounding. By this time over forty people were involved as officers and directors and advisers, quite apart from editors, proof-readers etc. The board was almost entirely composed of academics (an impressive roster of talent), but the gamble ultimately was commercial. Would the Library of America, like its Gallimard original, generate a profit? It is still too early to judge, but the signs are fair. At twenty-five dollars, each volume is a bargain. It is a bargain even for those totting up the equivalent paperback prices of their individual components. Within three months a second printing was needed and 89,000 copies of the first four titles (early Melville, three novels by Harriet Beecher Stowe, the poetry and prose of Walt Whitman, the complete tales and sketches of Nathaniel Hawthorne) are on sale. They and their successors, we are assured, will be permanently available.

This will prove a boon to all, but particularly to university teachers. The unpredictability of mass publishing has long been an exhausting worry. The study of American literature is dedicated, to a large degree, by the availability of Penguins and Signets and Bantams (among others). Will Jack London's *The Iron Heel* or Henry Adams's *Democracy*, an anxious instructor asks, still be in stock in 1984? As R. W. Lewis put it:

you could teach *The Scarlet Letter*, but you couldn't teach *The House of the Seven Gables*; *The Portrait of a Lady*, but not *Roderick Hudson*; *Silver Lapham*, but not *Annie Kilburn* or *The Landlord at Lion's Head*.

To make the texts available, then, was all-important. But what texts? Edited by whom? It was here that the university presses, still producing annotated editions for CEAA, put up a last stand. An armistice was eventually reached, with the Library of America contracting to rent many of the texts so laboriously established by the CEAA. *Editions de la Pléiade* (from the State University Press; Mark Twain's from the University of California, Melville's from the Northwestern-Newberry edition, or Howells's from the University of Indiana). The rental was fixed at 2.5 per cent of the royalties. So the CEAA, which so far had shown no profit whatsoever, could at least draw comfort from its new copyright material. The Library itself is a non-profit-making corporation.

Another line of attack was aesthetic. Who were these self-appointed priests of the literary canon? The American canon, more than most in the twentieth century, was notably unstable. Would a Library of the 1980s look as provincial or foolish in sixty years time as a hypothetically similar venture of the 1920s? The risk had to be taken. Revelations, akin to those of Melville or Thoreau or Dickinson or the, later James, seemed unlikely. More striking was the contemporary reevaluation of certain lesser writers (like Kate Chopin, for instance, or Mary Wilkins Freeman, or Gertrude

Stein) or black writers (like Frederick Douglass or W. E. B. DuBois) who might have been omitted from such a consensus only twenty years earlier. Nothing is *aere perennius*. But the time was clearly ripe. In the decade of the bicentenary, if ever, the United States could take possession of its "classics".

The roll-call is generous: Jefferson, Irving, Cooper, Poe, Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Parkman, Stowe, Twain, Howells, Henry James, Henry Adams, Stephen Crane and Jack London – all in the first thirty-six months. Ultimately there will be the whole of Mark Twain in six volumes and of Hawthorne, Emerson, Melville, and Adams in four volumes each. Of Henry James something like eight volumes of fiction, travel, autobiography and criticism are currently planned. Much of this will attract the stingiest librarian who, contemplating his already crowded shelves, may flinch from the bonanza as an avalanche of duplication. The first of the Hawthorne volumes, for example, is the only complete collection of his shorter fiction (now ranged in order of composition) ever made. The Whitman edition, containing the 1855 as well as the 1891-92 versions of *Leaves of Grass*, is more comprehensive than any other one-volume collection. The volume of Poe's critical and journalistic writings (due in spring, 1984) also fills a long-standing need. So too will the two massive tomes of James's collected reviews and criticism (projected for autumn, 1984).

Like *Editions de la Pléiade*, the Library of America is launched as an infinite enterprise. Here is the American version of a literary Eden which will constantly expand, as it reaches back into the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries as well as forward into the twentieth, while maintaining every volume permanently in print. Being an American Library, moreover, it will not split

Still, for the present, all is *luxu, calme et volupé*. Though containing an average of 1300 pages, these are not chunky blocks but elegant, friendly volumes (about five inches by eight) which open readily and actually lie flat, as Edmund Wilson had insisted. Bruce Campbell is their designer. They are printed on acid-free, bible-thin paper. They look permanent and (according to the Library's release) "will last for generations and withstand the wear of frequent use". Possibly shorter-lived may be the scholarship. Text apart, the

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apparatus has been kept to a minimum: a brief chronological tabulation of the author's life; a note on the texts; and a modest clutch of explanatory comments, with details of some textual variants. All this is fine. But some price had to be paid for the headlong rush between the award of a grant of 1979 and the first batch of publications last year.

Take the volume of Mark Twain's *Mississippi Writings*, edited by Guy Cardwell. For *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* he had the University of California edition, prepared for the Iowa Center for Textual Studies by Paul Baender and associates. For *Pudd'nhead Wilson* he used not the first edition, but the serialization that appeared in the *Century Magazine*, as being proof-read, in part at least, by Clemens himself. For *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* he used the first American edition (1885) as "at present the best available text". Similarly for *Life on the Mississippi* he used the first American edition (1883), adding:

Ultimately, the methodically prepared text of the future will involve a comparison of the first American edition and the holograph manuscript held since 1909 by the J. Pierpont Morgan Library. The manuscript contains matter not in the book, and the book, matter not in the manuscript.

For Clemens revised both the typescript and printer's proofs. So in this instance a fuller, more authoritative text will one day be available. In some ways it already is available, since Willis Wager (whose 1942 dissertation for New York University is named) published a fuller version of the Morgan Library material in his 1944 text for the Limited Editions Club, introduced by Edward Wagenknecht. This included long passages on slavery and the Civil War never again reprinted. It was, in Wagenknecht's words, "the first 'complete' edition that has ever been published". None of this is detailed by Cardwell even in the most cursory manner, though he notes four typesetter's errors of which three were picked out for comment by Wager himself at the end of his "Note on These Suppressed Passages".

None of this is intended to denounce Cardwell. His choices are eminently sensible, though I regret that no room was found to quote, or even discuss, these suppressions. What this instance highlights, rather, is the controversy between the CEAA and the (then) Literary Classics of the United States. Where a CEAA now exists, it can be used. Where none exists, the present Library of America text must expect to be overtaken, and even eventually overturned, by the slow-grinding, methodical processes of the CEAA. That had been the "professional" MLA answer to Wilson all along. In most cases it may make little difference. In the case I have highlighted a certain variety — a sense of proximity to Twain's own work — has certainly been lost.

To many (outside Russia, where he continues to be a best-seller) the inclusion so early in the grand parade of Jack London may come as a surprise. Why London? Or, more precisely, why London for the Library's first foray into the twentieth

century? For a start, as Daniel Aaron has put it:

We want to be a little unpredictable. We're not trying to satisfy current conventions of what's major and what isn't; we're trying to be broad and show the richness and range of the American literary heritage. To make that purpose clear, we're doing some of the more unexpected things early on.

There is something of a plenitude here; for the very word "heritage" is calculated to suggest something roomy and rich. The poor have no "heritage". Or perhaps they have only a national heritage. Daniel Aaron, in fact, sounds more and more like a drummer for the National Trust. Instead of stately homes Americans are invited to rediscover a "literary heritage", mostly in the grand manner, but with also, here and there, a diversion, an unexpected, entertaining, *nouveau* niche estate from the *fin de siècle*.

London has not been served well by his critics. Charles N. Watson's dogged reappraisal is no exception. He was alive all, a storyteller and should be read, not with Spencer and Huéckel and Marx and Nietzsche on their Californian shelves, but in the company of contemporary storytellers, which includes Gorki and Kipling and Anatole France. His tales of the Klondike made him famous. He followed Melville into the Pacific as he anticipated Hemingway in his zest for boxing ("A Piece of Steak") and war-correspondence. Like Lawrence, he could project himself, or uncannily reinvent himself, in animal form. *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* are among the most memorable novels ever written about animals. His own early life as an oyster pirate in San Francisco, a hobo, a prison inmate, a labourer in the Oakland slums and failed gold-pro prospector in Alaska, was transformed into a fascinating saga in fiction and recollections. From London's *The Road* an American reader can turn to Kerouac's *On the Road*; from his *The People of the Abyss*, a British reader to Orwell's *Down and Out in London and Paris*.

The first of these two volumes clearly earns its place in the Library. It is about the second that I have my doubts. As Malcolm Cowley observed, very few American authors deserve to be presented in complete sets. The Emersons and Melvilles and Twains should be considered as exceptions rather than the rule. If a one-volume Whitman is possible, why London in two? He was a pretty suspect socialist. Though outraged by the excesses of

capitalism, he behaved (when he had the chance) like a besotted capitalist himself. He fed on brutality (in the Klondike) as on human degradation (in London's East End). He gloried in hunting and being hunted. So he could never reconcile his pose of Nietzschean superman and Marxist revolutionary. He wanted to be both a lone wolf, that is, and leader of the wolf pack.

Should *Martin Eden* (his autobiographical novel) or *John Barleycorn* (his confession of alcoholism) really be

contemporary social fantasies, such as Howell's *A Traveller from Altruria*, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and Ignatius Donnelly's *César's Column*.

Still, one must not cavil at the Library of America's generosity. Here is infinite riches in a little room. Many of these novels and essays have long been difficult to find. Now they are to be canonized in *perpetuum*. That is the rub. Jack London was a peculiarly irresolute and unresolved man. It is



Jack London and his wife

considered part of the "American literary heritage"? *The People of the Abyss* (1903) is reprinted here without the large number of photographs (many taken by London himself) which, though not keyed into the text, formed an integral part of the original Macmillan edition. Leon Trotsky, for one, was impressed by *The Iron Heel* (1908), that vision of an American fascist state (alliance of a plutocracy, secret police, military, and a few powerfully subsidized unions) perpetuating financial capitalism by force until the twenty-third century. But this might have been presented (with some of London's political essays, like "How I Became a Socialist", "The Scab", "Revolution") in a volume of

difficult to take him quite seriously. He was the last pulp author of genius, before the rise of Hollywood, to feed the dreams and passions of the literate masses. A crude disciple of Kipling, he fathered a hollow archetype: the virile American as man of letters, perpetuated over two further generations by Ernest Hemingway, Jack Kerouac, and Norman Mailer.

The Kipling of the Klondike they called him, or the Bret Harte of the Yukon. For it was the Alaskan foray of 1897-98 that provided the pay-day for the rest of his literary career. Yet it was his experience as an eighteen-year-old hobo that provides more telling clues. *The Road* (1907) is dedicated to Josiah Flynt; and in "Homosexuality Among

Tramps" Flynt declared that one of the 60,000 professional tramps was an invert. Such men would pick up slum boys between the ages of five and fifteen and seduce them into travelling "prushuns"; their masters, "picks", London was careful to dissociate himself from such trade. In his essay on "Road-Kids and Gay-Cats" he states:

I was never a prushun, for I didn't take kindly to possession. I was a road-kid and then a profe... And be it known, here and now, that the profe... are the aristocracy of The Road. They are the lords and masters, the aggressive men, the primordial noblemen, the *bona fides*...

What London was claiming surreptitiously is that he was never a *semit*, underdog, never a pariah, never part of this sterile wasteland, but a *bona fides* aggressor, the primordial beast. The image is determinedly butch. As it remains, whether snooping in Whitechapel among the tars and muggers of the Commercial Road, or roistering in the South Sea, the macho Californian speaks for his misfits. He is the *bona fides* of the *bona fides*, the *bona fides* of the *bona fides*. Though superficially akin to George Orwell's, Jack London's descent into the abyss (equipped with camera and house with a police detection) was like a photo-journalist's search for copy. For he knows what awaits sluggish, drab, stunted dross of capitalist machine. In his *Wagon* fantasy, *The Iron Heel*, he switched to that of blond superman (terrorist). But it is typical of his vision (and his most potent legacy) that him the golden age of socialism dawned only three hundred years after successful fascist revolution. (It was not London but John Reed who, with Villa's guerrillas across Chihuahua, it was Reed who was to be buried under the walls of the Kremlin.)

As Kenneth Rexroth long ago observed: London practically invented the heroism as Good Chum. To homosexuality is not the point of the immaturity. There are no adults anywhere in London's fiction. It is impossible to be seriously sea captains, goldmine entrepreneurs, revolutionaries, leaders who behave like *bona fides* playground bullies and Eagle Scouts... So London's best stories are about dogs. I, as a man, think they better, but maybe if dogs could read they'd think they were kind of *bona fides*.

The underlying cause of migration during these years was a fundamental and long-term change in Highland society, but the principal agents of change — the improving landlords — wanted to keep people, not lose them. Sheep clearances had very little to do with the displacement, but attempts to provide new sources of livelihood — manufactures, fisheries and commerce — required a "total change of lifestyle", which Highlanders resented and sought to evade by migration. Some landlords, such as those who drew a substantial income from kelp, had an immediate interest in keeping a large number of families where they could be employed in this seasonal work. Others had a wider view of the future and believed that "population was one of the keys to prosperity, and no country could afford to lose its labouring classes. Scotland had, allegedly done in the years before the American Revolution."

Faced with this almost unanimous opposition to emigration on the part of the landowning and official classes, the Highlander who wished to move had to follow his own resources; it was not the poor or dispossessed but families with enough property or prospects to raise money to pay for their emigration. For someone interested in the future of the settlements to which they went, the comforting conclusion is that migration drew off those who were able to look after themselves and to make a rational choice. Against this picture of responsible men selecting a

more pedantic criticism is that Mr Burnsted might be a little more explicit about the sources in this field. Lists of reference numbers from the National Library of Scotland, the Scottish Record Office, and the Public Record Office do not tell us much. He is fully aware of the difficulties in writing the history of people who seldom spoke for themselves, and it is all the more important for a scholar to see at a glance who claimed to speak for them. A critical essay on the sources would have been a useful addition to the book. A compensation for this omission is the reproduction in full of the extant shipping lists of emigrants to British North America from 1773 to 1815. These names, with their ages, places of previous residence, and occupation are eloquent testimony to the fortitude of those who have no other memorial.

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## Home from home

Mark Abley

PATRICK A. DUNAE

Gentlemen Emigrants: From the British Public Schools to the Canadian Frontier

276pp. Manchester University Press. £16.50. 0 88094 324 5

Travelling through the wilderness of what is now south-eastern Saskatchewan in May 1888, John Donkin, an English member of the North-West Mounted Police, found himself in the unlikely name of Cannington Manor. Apparently he did not arrive at a moment when a sheepchase, a cricket match, an opera or a Shakespeare play was in progress. But he did observe the flocks of Cotswold and Leicester sheep, the city white-washed houses, and the Anglican Church of All Saints' Anglican Church; and what he saw was "so painfully suggestive of the dear land across the sea" that Donkin wondered "if he had ridden into a dream world."

Patrick Dunae's thoughtful study of middle and upper-class emigrants includes many success-stories of men who acquired fame, wealth and power in Canada, but somehow it is the failures who stay in the mind. In the words of a character in Henry Bashford's novel *The Manitoba* (1904), "To be English stood for debt

## Scottish diaspora

W. R. Brock

J. M. BURNSTED

The People's Clearances 1770-1815: Highland Emigration to British North America

305pp. Edinburgh University Press. £8.524 419 3

Any book that helps to dispel the clouds of error surrounding emigration from the Highlands is welcome; J. M. Burnsted's is doubly so because it is based on extensive research amongst the sources. It deals only with emigration to British North America, and despite some references back to years before the American revolution and one chapter on emigration after 1804, the bulk of the work examines the last decade of the eighteenth and the first years of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless it will hold an honoured place when the full history of the Scottish diaspora comes to be written.

The underlying cause of migration during these years was a fundamental and long-term change in Highland society, but the principal agents of change — the improving landlords — wanted to keep people, not lose them. Sheep clearances had very little to do with the displacement, but attempts to provide new sources of livelihood — manufactures, fisheries and commerce — required a "total change of lifestyle", which Highlanders resented and sought to evade by migration. Some landlords, such as those who drew a substantial income from kelp, had an immediate interest in keeping a large number of families where they could be employed in this seasonal work. Others had a wider view of the future and believed that "population was one of the keys to prosperity, and no country could afford to lose its labouring classes. Scotland had, allegedly done in the years before the American Revolution."

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Somerset by the name of Edward Pierce, even told a prospective colonist: "You will still fancy yourself in England, only without England's worries and anxieties... [you] can lead and enjoy an English squire's existence of a century ago!" Thanks to such rhetoric Pierce convinced several hundred of his countrymen to amble into the future with both eyes on the past. Inevitably the venture failed: by 1902 Cannington Manor was uninhabited. The reasons for its collapse say a good deal about the motives for which it was established. Its pork-packing and cheese-processing plants had run at a loss, while Pierce had discouraged any manufacturing industries because of their "vulgarity". Many of his farmers were more interested in hunting and racing than in growing wheat, and Pierce was scornful of the dominion that had obligingly provided him with prime land. On one occasion he insisted that a Manitoba-born girl was really Scottish, for her parents were Scots; after all, "If a man was born in a stable, would he be a horse?"

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and drink, gentlemanly manners and general inefficiency. To be Canadian stood probably for a balance at the bank, a seat in the Bible class, and a reputation for hard work... This was, of course, grossly unfair to the great majority of British immigrants, who, deprived of the dubious benefits of a public-school education and a regular regiment from home, could be as efficient and uncouth as anyone else. For they had no chance to go back; they lacked the means to be wrong and romantic. But the feckless boys who drank away their remittances and worked as little as possible became notorious throughout western Canada, and were largely responsible for a spate of anti-English jokes and a proliferation of job notices bearing the postscript: "NO ENGLISHMEN NEED APPLY". Across an ocean the old dream often sank to the bottom, and in spite of the best efforts of the gentry to establish a permanent social hierarchy, levelling impulses commonly produced events of a certain historical irony; the 6th Marquis of Anglesey, for example, was denied any government assistance in maintaining his aristocratic colony in central British Columbia by a provincial premier who had begun work down a British colliery.

Many of the emigrants were hampered by a belief that Canada, being part of the Empire and thoroughly pink on their maps, would prove to be as British in spirit as, say, Eastbourne or Cheltenham. The truth, as they soon found, was painfully remote from their dear land across the sea. Unscrupulous emigration agents and supposedly encouraged all sorts of delusions; the unlikely readers of William Dunlop's *Statistical Sketches of Upper Canada for the Use of Emigrants* were assured that Ontario's winters resembled those of Holland. In some ways immigrants to Canada from the steppes of Russia or the plains of Germany had a far

preferred way of life the opponents of emigration developed an account which figured again and again in every presentation of the case: the would-be migrants were simple people deluded by men who exploited them to gain a share of their passage money. Once on board a ship they would be overworked, badly fed, and prone to disease; if they survived the voyage they would find themselves in a land where no preparations had been made to receive them. Thus landlords opposed to emigration could present themselves as true friends of the people, and their efforts were rewarded by the first ship's Passenger Act of 1803 which, by laying down standards for accommodation, provisions and medical aids, so raised the cost of passages that emigration was severely reduced.

With his sympathies wholly on the side of the emigrants, Mr Burnsted weighs the scales of judgment against upper-class members of the Highland Society who worked hard for this measure. The Ship's Passenger Act was a landmark in the development of public responsibility and does not deserve the verdict that "a more disingenuous 'reform' is difficult to conceive and... certainly calls into question the true motivations of other humanitarian gestures of the time with which it has been associated, such as the regulation of the slave trade and the first factory legislation of 1802." A similar line of criticism suggests that Mr Burnsted might emphasize a little less the efforts of those who guarded the interests of helping landowners and a little more the work of men such as the intelligent, humane, optimistic and incredibly industrious Sir John Sinclair. A good deal of hard-headed calculation went into the projects for relieving the Highlands; but the dream itself was not unworthy.

easy time of it than those fresh from an English public school; they may have had to master a new language, but they could hardly have arrived so ignorant of the practical details of life. When the Britannia Colonists reached Saskatchewan in 1903, a sarcastic reporter on the local newspaper described them in Biblical rhythms: "the men of the city showed unto the children of England which part of the axe is the handle and with which part wood is cleaved." It may or may not be true that one of these colonists, not knowing how to release his horses from his wagon, tipped up the back of it so that the animals could drink; it was certainly believed to be true. Yet unlike the previous attempts to create purely upper-class refuges in Canada, the Britannia Colony included a fair proportion of artisans and tradesmen. And unlike its predecessors, it endured.

Early in *Gentlemen Emigrants* Dunae demonstrates how emigration was widely thought to provide an ideal solution for the "younger son" question which so preoccupied Victorian society. But once these younger sons arrived in the colonies, they could choose to follow either of two very different ways of life. One was the path of pleasure; as Agnes Skrine, the wife of a sports-loving rancher, cheerfully observed, "Shooting, fishing, and hunting, just the things which would bring you to the verge of bankruptcy at home, you can enjoy here practically for nothing. You can have all the horses you want... In 1882 one gentleman lamented in *The Field* that after six days' shooting he had bagged only 670 game birds; a pair of good dogs would have doubled the number. But even young men whose ambitions extended beyond the blood sports tended to see Canada as a land which offered adventure for the taking.

The alternative, as propounded by Catherine Traill in *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836), was to lead "the advanced guard of civilization... by founding villages and pleasant homesteads in the wilds." This moralistic view gained strength later in the century with the growth of muscular Christianity and an unashamedly imperial faith. The young men who entered Canada fresh from Robert Johnson's Colonial College in Holesley Bay, Suffolk, were imbued with a sense of mission: "to carry forward the flag of the great mother of Nations, to sustain her good name... to open up new lands, to open new markets... Individual success had become a moral duty. Dunae has no doubt that Canada benefited enormously from the presence of tens of thousands of British gentlemen; he considers their work to have been "vitally important" in government and business, "immense" in culture and religion, "indelible" in education, and "seminal" in the country's development. These are large claims, and it is doubtful if *Gentlemen Emigrants* contains enough evidence to justify them.

The honourable schoolboys could hardly have found a more sympathetic chronicler than Patrick Dunae. He rightly insists that their behaviour cannot be judged without an appreciation of their values and ideals. None the less, other historians may prefer to draw less charitable conclusions as to why so many of these emigrants, blessed with health, youth, intelligence and money, ended up as figures of derision. Nor would many writers born in Canada in 1950 use "gentility" as a compliment. The disappearance of polo, and seem to equate "culture" with "Old World refinement". The dust-jacket promises a forthcoming history of gentlemen emigrants throughout the British Empire; Dr Dunae appears well qualified to write such a book, provided that he never again employs the word "prestigious" seven times in a single chapter.

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## commentary

## Processional mysteries

Paula Neuss

The Chester Cycle  
The University of Toronto  
The University of Leeds

Queen Margaret had to miss the Domesday pageant at Coventry in 1457. The same fate befell me at both Leeds and Toronto this year. But perhaps it was more important to have been able to see plays whose material is less familiar, such as the *Navities* containing a virginity test, where the doubting midwife receives a withered hand, subsequently cured by the Christ-child, for her intrusion. There were also episodes unique to the Chester cycle, like that of Balaam and his talking ass Burnell (which in Toronto bore a distinct resemblance to the March Hare).

Each production attempted as far as possible to reproduce the conditions of the original performances, using processional staging, with each pageant performed by a different group, over a three-day holiday period (the Chester plays were performed on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Whit week during the sixteenth century). The Leeds production, by the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies, directed by Jane Oakshott, was set in 1553 and the Toronto one, by the Pociu Ludique Societas, directed by David Parry, in 1572. The overall effect in Leeds was the more homogeneous since Meg Twycross had designed the costumes for the whole cycle, and the various angels and Christs did not differ as much as they did in Toronto.

The Chester cycle has been unpopular until now, and this renewed interest in it has been brought about by several scholarly and critical works, the authors of which were present at two symposia in Toronto organized by REED (Records of Early English Drama). Laurence Clopper recently edited the Chester records for REED, while R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills have not only edited the entire cycle for the EETS, but have recently brought out a volume, *Essays and Documents; with an Essay "Music in the Cycle"* by Richard Rastall (339pp. University of North Carolina Press, £30.00/80/82 \$22.50). In which they show that far from being the earliest mystery cycle, as had previously been supposed, Chester is in fact the latest and did not achieve its full cyclic form until early in the sixteenth century. Thus the Chester cycle is actually Tudor, though there was an earlier, one-day Corpus Christi play which may have had a stationary rather than a processional performance in medieval times. Peter Travis, in his book *Dramatic Design in the Chester Cycle*, (310pp. University of Chicago Press, £11.95. 0 226 81164 6) argues further that this cycle shows a particularly Tudor historical consciousness.

The processional staging was brilliantly successful. Leeds used three stations and Toronto four, both within university grounds which one could argue, had some resemblance to medieval streets. The wagons

followed one after another with scarcely any disorganization. In Toronto the gap at the final station after the first play before the long second play of the Fall and Cain and Abel was filled by a performance of *Robin Hood and the Friar*. The inevitably cramped space on the wagons was supplemented by using the ground in front.

In both productions the Painters' Shepherds play was one of the most engaging, no doubt partly owing to the use of a real baby for Christ, and the play turned out to be quite as entertaining as its more popular rival the Wakefield Second Shepherds play (probably the best known and most often performed medieval play). There the shepherds spend a great deal of time carping about the injustice of the gentry and the nagging of their wives - in this cycle we watched some generally good-natured fellows larking about rather like overgrown schoolboys with no pretence that they needed to spend any time looking after sheep. While therefore there could be no pun on sheep's Lamb of God like that made in the Wakefield play, these shepherds' coronation meal (as Peter Travis points out in his book) can be seen as a parody of the mass, and he must have been pleased that in the Toronto production the shepherds shared their bread with the audience.

This play also managed the shift from the comic to the serious, sometimes thought a problem in medieval drama, without any difficulty. The much more difficult, because more abrupt, shift of mood from farce to tragedy in the Massacre of the Innocents, from laughter at the cowardly behaviour of Herod's two knights, Sir Waradake and Sir Lancherdeep, to horror when a dead baby is held up on a soldier's spear's end, was also successful.

One of the most important aspects of the plays is their commercial quality, which on paper is more likely to go unnoticed than their piety. They were originally put on "not only for the augmentation... of the... faith... but also for the common wealth and prosperity of this city". It was hoped to make money out of them. Each guild was concerned with its own profit as well as with that of the city, and therefore with doing its own play better than the next, for one thing about processional staging is that you can see a play you like again and decided to miss the next one. Also there was unlikely to be the kind of overall pattern Travis argues for in his book. The structure of a cycle is more like that of the *Canterbury Tales*, in which each story-teller is vying for the prize.

Each pageant with an "unpopular" subject had its own attraction (such as Balaam's Ass) and the Tudor players could count on their audiences having some unusual effect to look forward to, since they would have seen the play before. The revivals did not have this advantage but no pageant was ever playing to an empty space, even in the pouring rain. Though there were larger numbers watching the Crucifixion there were still some waiting for the Harrowing of Hell, with its Rum-Tum-Tugger of a Devil.

## Fifty years on: Violet Trefusis

The TLS of June 1, 1933, carried the following review of Violet Trefusis's novel *Tandem*: "Tandem, because though Madame Demetriades had three daughters, Marguerite whose perfect digestion was considered a little vulgar did not count, while of the two others Pénélope was always more brilliant, more in the limelight than Irene. Pénélope, who at ten had written a comic which revealed her future gifts as a writer, had no inferiority complex at all, and was perfectly equal to entertaining all the guests in her mother's salon, though they included Robert de Montequion, Edmond de Polignac, Marcel Croust, Claude Debussy, Barres, and a few more. Young Mr. Gottsclaw was so terrified by the blighty atmosphere of the drawing of Pénélope, while very quickly married the petite Irish lady, carried her off to his English home,



Giovanni Belzoni (1778-1823), a posthumous lithograph showing the explorer with some of the Egyptian antiquities which he brought to England, including, on the right "The Young Memnon", which impressed both him and Shelley after its arrival at the British Museum in 1818; an item in the exhibition reviewed here.

## Remains to be seen

David Alexander

The Inspiration of Egypt  
Brighton Museum and Art Gallery

We are all more or less aware that Egypt has had a fascination for the British, but few comprehensive attempts have been made to assess Egypt's influence on British artists, travellers and designers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This gap has now been filled by a most imaginative exhibition organized by Brighton Museum. The exhibition, which has over 400 exhibits including ceramics and furniture and other objects as well as pictures of all kinds, is accompanied by an extremely valuable catalogue written by the exhibition organizer, Patrick Connor, with David Beevers and Briony Llewellyn (168pp, with 55 illustrations. £4 post free from Brighton Museum, Church Street, Brighton BN1 1UE).

The early material is of necessity rather thin; few British travellers reached Egypt in the eighteenth century and their influence was not very important. It was 1801 before any pictures resulting from a British expedition to Lower Egypt were published: the aquatints based on Luigi Mayer's watercolours, three of which are shown from the incomparable collection of pictures associated with travels to the Middle East formed by Rodney Seagrist. The Egyptian influence on design often came not directly but via Rome and other continental capitals; thus pyramids built by British architects were based on the acutely angled tomb of Calus Cestius rather than the pyramids of Giza. Wedgwood used designs by Monfaucou and Fischer von Erlach, neither of whom had been to Egypt and both of whom treated Egyptian forms as springboards for the imagination. Even after the French invasion of Egypt, and the publication of the sketches made by Baron Denon, Piranesi's designs continue to provide ideas, notably for the furniture designed by Thomas Hope, to emphasize Hope's importance, the exhibition contains a reconstruction of the Egyptian fireplace in the "Closet" of his house, in Duchess Street and pieces of his furniture are also shown.

## commentary

## Historical tragical-pastoral

Harold Hobson

ANGELO BEOLCO, 'IL RUZANTE'

The Comedy without a Title  
Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith

In *The Comedy without a Title*, Shared Experience introduces to London a Renaissance dramatist, Angelo Beolco (called Il Ruzante, the fast talker) who, though frequently played in France and Italy, is unknown in Britain. A favourite writer of Galileo's, Ruzante belonged to a family of wealthy merchants, was born fifty years before Shakespeare, was a friend of the aristocracy, organized a troupe of players from the best people in Padua, received the education of a man of breeding, and administered the family estates, yet in his plays showed no conception whatever of the feudal nature of society. In the four of his pieces which Shared Experience have moulded into their evening's entertainment there are no dukes, princes, priests, artists or scientists, there are no oppressors and no oppressed. There are just peasants, more peasants, and nobody but peasants. Ruzante himself, despite his birth, his upbringing, and his financial activities, could pass himself off as a Paduan peasant so convincingly that these bucolic and rustic characters took him for one of themselves. He is a remarkable dramatist, and his work is

startlingly adapted and directed by Mike Alfreds. He did not either hate or admire the élite; he simply ignored them. His interest lies in the fact that he was an ostentatiously pastoral writer who was also deeply cynical and tragic in outlook.

By far the best, though not the most ambitious, of the four plays is the last: "Winter" (the plays show the four seasons) in the Paduan countryside. Menegio (Philip Voss) is an old and dignified peasant who is convinced that he is going to die of hunger. Wind, rain and poor harvests are the enemies of Ruzante's characters, and they rack their unfortunate minds with bizarre theories of the best ways of combating them. Menegio hopelessly suggests that if he never relieved his bowels, all his food would remain inside him, and so he would never be hungry. He is discouraged when his friends, who seem to meet the challenge of Nature more cheerfully, assure him that he is mistaken. At this point an angel (John Price) appears, and, in one of Ruzante's rare moments of compassion, tells the old man not to be afraid. After death life goes on pretty much as it has done before, only more richly and more happily. The hunters go on hunting, and those who love solitude and piety sing praises to the glory of God. This is a beautiful passage, full of sympathy, and John Price speaks it with the quiet and subdued urgency of one who is trying to comfort a frightened child. Listening to him gives the same peaceful joy as

looking at the illustrations in a Book of Hours. And when he has finished speaking, and returned to the place whence he came, what happens? Why, the old man dies, of course. In happiness, in confidence, in peaceful expectation of the fields of amaranth that lie on the other side of the grave? Not a bit of it: he dies in torment and anguish, writhing on the ground in agony and despair, in a cruel, piercing spotlight that isolates him on the suddenly darkened stage. Ruzante is a cynic; he leads you up the garden path, to show you not the lilies and the roses, but the dungheap.

In "Summer", the second play, there is the same kind of wilful and mischievous deception. The only character of the evening who is not actually a peasant, a soldier, his armour battered and blood running down his legs, rushes onto the stage, vowing that he will never go to war again. James Smith plays this part with spirit and panache, arguing against war, taking the audience into his confidence, putting the Renaissance pacifist case with swashbuckling authority, and then, just when he has worked himself wholly into our sympathies, he is shown by Ruzante to be a coward, a liar, a braggart, a person infinitely contemptible. With engaging humour, the name he gives him is Ruzante.

The most substantial play is the first, "Spring", in the Paduan countryside. A prologue urges us all to be natural, to throw aside all our conventions, get rid of our pretences, to return to the

simplicity and honesty of the rural pastures, and think of love and marriage. This prologue is well spoken by Jimmy Yuill, with no suggestion of what all this simple-hearted goodness means to his artful author. It turns out, of course, to be sexual licence, cuckoldry, absolute heartlessness, and the irresistible call of the privy. There is murder, too: murder without that repentance which in the last moment of the third play, "Autumn", causes John Price to show us his deathly hands with horror, and to raise his terrified and supplicating eyes to heaven. Ruzante is an agreeable one, and Shared Experience have added to their laurels (though not, perhaps, to their wealth) by giving us *The Comedy without a Title*.

The evening, instructive, socially and individually revealing, adding considerably to our knowledge of the European theatre, is spoilt by the poverty and appalling filthiness of the play's language. I assure Mike Alfreds that there are more words in the English language for backside and evacuation than arise and shit. Some audiences may be thrilled to hear these words spoken by actors now and again; but to hear them repeated with relentless monotony for two-and-a-half hours must be a bore to even the most ardent student of coprology. Both the translator and the author (if the philosophy of his angel is true) would do well to buy a mouthwash, a clean typewriter and a dictionary.

## House-bound days

Peter Kemp

Nellie  
Radio 4  
A Day in the Life of H. G. Wells  
Radio 3

Nellie Titterton, owner of the biscuit tin in which Hardy's heart was stored until his Dorset burial, worked for seven years or so as parlour maid at Max Gate. Her spy memories of that period - recounted by a later employer and confidante, Hilary Townsend - made an unusual and entertaining interlude on Radio 4.

Itemizing the tedious routine amid which Wells feared he would be trapped for life - and with which he later encumbered jaunty protagonists like Kipps and Mr Polly - the Southsea extract shows him stressing a characteristic theme. Starting despondently out of the dreary window, he registers a "blind alley", the faintest intimation of any further escape. Escape-routes from such claustrophobic situations were what Wells spent much of his life looking out for. A major one was opened up by his studentship to the Normal School of Science: in his autobiography, balancing the dismal day of incarceration at Southsea, is the bright morning, when he hurried across Kensington Gardens to sample for his scientific studies.

The programme jumped over this, choosing instead - as a sample of Wells's student days - his account of Sunday afternoons in slightly disreputable lodgings, where he perched gaily on a sofa with a girl, attempting small invasions of her costume, which she fended off with cries of "Owl sharp!" and "Nart that". Again, St John's accent served the story nicely. But the programme was wrong to imply that these sabbatical scufflings typified Wells's life. For all the presenter's joceous allusions to Wells's later sexual notoriety, he was very inexperienced at that time; the tone of the passage is partly dictated by the older Wells's amusement at the awkwardness of his earlier self. Nor was he being ironic when he remembered feeling that these afternoons "interfered rather vexatiously with the proper copying out of my notes of Professor Huxley's lectures." As Wells always took pains to emphasize, it was just for knowledge that his first year at South Kensington

with some not entirely accurate biographical summary. The first piece - describing Wells's arrival at a drapery emporium in Southsea, and the kind of life he subsequently led there - is a lively retrospect of a time of deadly boredom. Exhilaratingly, it chronicles stultifying days. To his reading of it, St John's brought the right accent of cocky, Cockney resilience, but he couldn't catch the inimitable note of Wells's own voice - still to be heard readily pontificating in old radio broadcasts, and once characterized by Julian Huxley as "curious, atonic, thin... physiologically inexplicable".

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Domestic disclosures were also promised by Radio 3's *A Day in the Life of H. G. Wells*, though the programme concerned itself with a number of Wells's days, and ones separated by some period of time. To document them, it scissored out a couple of extracts from his *Experiments in Autobiography*, interlarding these

## Local lore

Ronald Hayman

ROBERT HOLMAN  
Other Worlds  
Royal Court Theatre

The London theatre all too seldom rises to the level achieved at the Royal Court with Richard Wilson's finely cast production of Robert Holman's finely written play *Other Worlds*. There is nothing sensationalist, catnippery or particularly newsworthy about it. It is not formally adventurous and it does not attach itself to the life of any well-known man or woman.

The opening of the play is almost as hard to stage as the opening of *The Tempest*, with fishermen standing unsteadily on a beach, lantern in hand, buffeted by the savage storm that is wrecking a ship just off the coast. It is 1797, the fifth year of the war against the French. A Napoleonic invasion is threatened, and it does not occur to these men that the North Yorkshire coast is an unlikely point for a landing. As we see later, they cannot even tell the difference between a Frenchman and a gorilla dressed in a jersey.

Robert Holman gleams comedy from the local ignorance but without being patronizing in his attitude to it. Towards the end he makes slightly top-down use of the attitudes formed when two of the most sympathetic characters join forces to do educational work, but throughout most of the action he shows that ignorance is only one of the factors causing the suffering of these fishermen and farm-workers. It may be typical of them to believe that worms, swelled alive, have a contraceptive effect, but enlightenment would neither reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies nor erode the Puritanical hostility to extramarital love.

The power of the play depends partly on its truthfulness, partly on tension and atmosphere, partly on Holman's skill in manipulating intransigent and unfamiliar narrative material. In some ways the subject-matter is reminiscent of plays such as *The Whilby Lighthouse Disaster*, constructed for a regional repertory company around an actual incident which has found its way into local lore; but this action is not merely of local interest. There is great resonance in the classed, generational, and groups of people who are not even in rivalry but simply different from each other.

The play's construction is unorthodox, with the first act set twenty years later than the second, and the third continuing from the first, but it is better to have one long flashback than a series of short ones, and the structural device produces interesting problems for both writer and actors. For the writer it is partly a matter of creating a story which can move forward by moving backwards, and he does this by introducing mysteries in the first act which are explained in the second. What started the enmity between the fishermen at Robin Hood's Bay and the villagers in Fylingthorpe? If Betsy is not really the niece of Anne Wheatley, the farming mother, why does she call her "aunt" and why was she taken into this household where she is neither quite a servant nor quite a member of the family? What caused the hatred between Anne and her husband? The story moves slowly but satisfyingly backwards and forwards, powerfully suggesting the bleak emotional climate in this cold and underpopulated part of Yorkshire at the end of the eighteenth century. The writing evokes considerable sympathy for the characters - even for the less likable ones. The farmer, John Wheatley, for example, cuts a pathetic figure when he comes into the farmhouse, messy and stinking after falling into the pig-trough, and cannot even muster enough authority to make Betsy obey his orders. But when drunk he is formidable.

During the first and third acts Jim Broadbent does well in this subtly nuanced role, and in the second he appears, quite plausibly, as Richard Wheatley, the self-confident father who sets standards of aggressiveness in his ineffectual son will copy. Juliet Stevenson turns in two warm and vibrant performances as the nineteen-year-old Betsy and as the affectionate girl who will die shortly after giving birth to her. Paul Copley, who has to play the same fisherman in all three acts, gives unforced performances at both ages, and his restraint is moving when Joe is confronted with a daughter who looks so much like her mother. Rosamund Leach is also required to age twenty years. We see little of her in the second act, but she gives an authoritative performance as the authoritative old lady in the first and third. Lesley Dunlop is affecting as Mary, and Peter O'Farrell, who plays a gorilla and a fisherman, conjures gives touching performances in both roles.

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# remainders

Eric Korn

Enough has been said, by me at any rate, about forgery, fraud, cozenage, imposture, superchic (the title, of course, of a newly-discovered Colette MS), illaquetation, bambazoolery and pifflodoodle. Away then, at least for a spell, with Payne Collier. Thomas Wise, R. H. Hearn, Cora Pearl, Paul Kammerer, Cyril Burt, Francis Pym, Arthur Gordon Pym (at least one of the names in this list is not a fraud), Geoffrey Howe, Cat Geoffrey, Mouscuddler, the Cat for Disarmament, Geoffrey Crayon, Washington Irving, Clifford Irving, Henry Irving (who was really John Henry Brodribb), Edward Irving and all the Irvingites, Ossian, Ireland, Tommy Chatterton and all the Marvellous Boys.

Let us turn to something clean, straightforward and manly, of which you could not ask for anything more so than Finn Havnévi's *English for Fishermen*, published by Fabritius and Sønners (Oslo, 1951), in their ever-admired "Fagbøker for Fiskere" series. (Other fagbøks include Havnévi's invaluable *Træl og Træfiske* and Jo Norling's *Pogo på Snurrepiske*; "Pogo", a folk-hero among trælmen, I believe, is obviously related to the English "poggy", a variety of menhaden, or cod, if not to "pogy", a small Arctic whaler; while the at-first-glance obscure "snurrepiske" is evidently a compound of "fisc", the Scottish legal term for the right of the Crown to the escheat of vacant estates, and the onomatopoeic "snurr", an expression of uncontrollable disgust at the machinations of Scottish lawyers.)

*English for Fishermen*, which despite its title is largely in Norse, at least at the outset, comes bound in sturdy and reliable boards with a stout canvas backstrip, in a reassuring shade of North Sea green, portraying a stalwart fisher hollering something in a clembeled and trustworthy manner. (I have always wanted to run a littoral tavern called "The Mariner's Hollow".) "Every Day for Food or Play", Coleridge. What the Norwegian is shouting is possibly "Have you any steam on the windless?", which turns up as early as page 21 to illustrate the verb "to have": "John's father has a fishing boat. The boat has four oars. Has your father a fishing boat, Jim?" With Jim's arrival, however, the dialogue turns sinister: "May I ask you to do me a service? Can you swim? Must you go now?" — which is doubtless where Jim gets the push and goes to feed the menhaden, and serve him right for trying to mix with the men when it's notorious that his father doesn't have a fishing boat, being a resident ballet critic of the *Grimsby Pilot*.

Every quirk of English grammar is illuminated by the same relentless cold fishy light: a few mackerels, many balbuts, much herring; the fisherman hauled in the rope/ the rope was hauled in by the fisherman. There is also plenty on the English way of life ("This is a kettle. In the kettle there is coffee. Some people like condensed milk in their coffee") and wholesome advice on how to conduct oneself in Fleetwood or Lissimouth: "You have some leisure hours when your boat is in port and should use your time in a practical way. There is much to be seen, monuments, beautiful churches, houses of unusual architecture."

There's obviously an infinitely expandable market for specialist language books. Gulf Airline for oil

riggers, Spanish for bull-fighters, Japanese for robots, Turkish for deconstructionists, Etruscan for brain surgeons, Wendish for surveyors. Have you a theodolite? Yes, I have several theodolites. Jim's theodolite is green, but Lydia's (the-of-Lydia) is purple (Skprz. plurr-pyll). No doubt one could go on.

Jacob Tonson, publisher of a sound eighteenth-century edition of Shakespeare, took an opportunity to rubbish the opposition:

N.B. Whereas one R. Walker has proposed to pirate all Shakespeare's Plays, but through Ignorance of what Plays are Shakespeare's, did in several Advertisements propose to print OEDIPUS KING OF THEBES, as one of Shakespeare's Plays, and has since printed *True's KING LEAR* instead of Shakespeare's. The World will therefore judge how likely they are to have a complete Collection of Shakespeare's Plays from the said R. Walker.

This advertisement appears on the last leaf of Tonson's *The Tragedy of Lear*, the *Eldest son of Brutus* by William Shakespeare.

Meanwhile, back in California, there is a disturbing tendency on the part of the locals to turn upside-down. "The most logical, comprehensive, and medically sound health care program," affirms Robert M. Martin, president of Gravity Guidance, Inc. in a tone that brooks little rebuttal. What he is selling is, essentially, a rugged steel towel-rail to be set at door-jamb height, with hooks for the feet. Some precautions, wisely, are taken to prevent the rail falling off the wall ("exclusive design prevents bar disengagement") or your feet falling out of their steel screw-in sockets ("Gravity Guidance Inversion Boots TM with snug cuffs and sturdy latches for security"). This reassured, you can hang upside-down in some convenient corner of the house until every thought you ever had comes rattling out through your ears. This will begin to compensate for the years you have spent just loafing about upright, or in Dr Martin's searing phraseology "allowing gravity to affect your bodies unidirectionally." Use the Gravity Guidance System TM to demand more from your body," he urges, but those of us not in the habit of demanding things from our bodies sometimes, if we ask them nicely, they will try to get through a whole day without surrendering to gravity entirely) will shrink from his pictures of reverse squats and oblique twists and the reverse military press — with a barbell (that, if you weaken, will drop not on your toe but on your chin, and the advanced equipment "for a more comprehensive inversion conditioning program". If the Lord had wanted us to hang around inverted, He'd have made us battier.

Meanwhile, right-side-up in Canada, literature flourishes as a parasite on vice, as it has suppose always done everywhere. Once-staid Ontario now has a Mediterranean profusion of lotteries, whose proceeds are devoted to virtuous or enjoyable objectives, like sculpture for metropolitan parkettes and artistic styrofoam seats for the shopping malls (and yes, if you recall the row about the goose with Christmas decoration found their necks, art won over commerce and

scarves were removed). But there is a more direct benefit: losing lottery tickets entitle you to a discount on selected novels of Canadian Content. An admirable scheme, I thought, but a sour local pointed to a sign on a local jewellery-and-notions store as emblematic of Canadian Content: "Pick out the Design of your choice and let us put a Maple Leaf on it."

So our locals flourish here, and get very cynical when I tell them how well-conducted, well-mannered and well-provided their cities are: how unpolluted, fair, and rich in bright Trillium and guizzical moose their unjammed, uncedared highways. But Canadian modesty (being modest, they think of it as the Canadian inferiority complex) is a wondrous thing; on one day I heard someone complain about the splendid proliferation of galleries of experimental art in Toronto on the weird grounds that American tourists might laugh at them, and read a newspaper that betrayed an even more bizarre sensitivity: "challenged by fancy imports, giggled at by U.S. visitors, Canada's stubby brown beer bottle..." Happy the land that has nothing to fear save that its beer-bottles are being mocked...

Those cheap mothers in the economy class, starting in dumb dismay at the swill we have just served you in the guise of lunch, are a lot less cocky now than you were a while back when you bought your tickets. "My, my," you whinnied, clutching your savings to your tiny souls, "two hundred pounds less than the normal fare, and the service can't be two hundred pounds worse, can it?"

Well it can, and I'd like to tell you what the fine ladies and gentlemen in the cabin class are doing now. Enjoying two hundred pounds' worth of your envy, that's what. While you listlessly fork in strands of rexine and slivers of scratchy iced cabbage, doused in a glutinous bitter dressing full of the natural goodness of ethylene glycol, they are enjoying two dozen of the finest Arachon oysters, washed down with an impeccably chilled Sancerre, skilfully uncorked by stewards, each one a superb physical specimen. While you are trying to pick shards of cracker from your bleeding palates, they are enjoying a mouthful of bouillabaisse, alive with gemlike crabs, with the most carefully nursed baby scudlings, with red peppers each a tiny Andalusian sunrise. After that comes a mangosteen sorbet with a glass of rare Calvados to open a *trou normand*.

While your ears are being insulted by Apalooza Gooser and his Chicken Liver Band (no, the headphones don't

on August 13th 1765, when Gaspar de Portola and his expedition crossed the Los Angeles River and proceeded down what is now Wilshire Boulevard. Geographically, at least, Gaspar was a wise man from the East, and Western Culture is surely what he found, not what he brought...

Good afternoon. This is your captain speaking, welcoming aboard Flight 101 those of you who have had the decency to pay a full fare.

Those cheap mothers in the economy class, starting in dumb dismay at the swill we have just served you in the guise of lunch, are a lot less cocky now than you were a while back when you bought your tickets. "My, my," you whinnied, clutching your savings to your tiny souls, "two hundred pounds less than the normal fare, and the service can't be two hundred pounds worse, can it?"

Well it can, and I'd like to tell you what the fine ladies and gentlemen in the cabin class are doing now. Enjoying two hundred pounds' worth of your envy, that's what. While you listlessly fork in strands of rexine and slivers of scratchy iced cabbage, doused in a glutinous bitter dressing full of the natural goodness of ethylene glycol, they are enjoying two dozen of the finest Arachon oysters, washed down with an impeccably chilled Sancerre, skilfully uncorked by stewards, each one a superb physical specimen. While you are trying to pick shards of cracker from your bleeding palates, they are enjoying a mouthful of bouillabaisse, alive with gemlike crabs, with the most carefully nursed baby scudlings, with red peppers each a tiny Andalusian sunrise. After that comes a mangosteen sorbet with a glass of rare Calvados to open a *trou normand*.

While your ears are being insulted by Apalooza Gooser and his Chicken Liver Band (no, the headphones don't

## Among this week's contributors

TOBIAS ASSE is a Fellow of New Hall, Cambridge.

JOHN ASHBERY's collections of poems include *Shadow Train*, 1982.

JOHN BATCHELOR is the author of *The Edwardian Novelists*, 1982.

HAROLD BRAVER is the editor of *The Science Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1976.

SAMUEL BEER's most recent book, *Britain Against Itself: The Political Contradictions of Collectivism*, was published last year.

CAROLINE BLACKWOOD is the co-author of the cookery book, *Darling, You Shouldn't Have Gone To So Much Trouble*, 1980.

SARAH BRADFORD's *Disraeli* was published last year.

W. R. BROCK is Professor Emeritus at the University of Glasgow, and author of *Scotus Americanus*, 1982.

HUGH BROGAN's books include *Tocqueville*, 1973, and *The Times Reports of the American Civil War*, 1975.

CHAD BROWN is co-author of *The Book of Royal Lists*, 1982.

JAMES CAMPBELL was Editor of the *New Edinburgh Review* 1982, and has edited a *New Edinburgh Review* Anthology.

TERENCE CAVE is the author of *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*, 1979.

MARTIN CLARK's *Antonio Gramsci and the Revolution that Failed* was published in 1977.

MARGARET DODDY is the author of *A Natural Passion*, a study of Richard's novels.

NORMAN GASH's books include *Sir Robert Peel*, 1972.

VICTORIA GLENDINNING's biography of Vita Sackville-West will be published later this year.

SIR HAROLD HOBSON is an honorary fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

CHRISTOPHER HOPE's collection of stories, *Private Parts and Other Tales*, was published last year.

HUGH KENNER's *A Colder Eye*, an account of the Irish Revival, will be published later this year.

ERIC KORN is an antiquarian bookseller in London.

STEPHEN KOSS's first volume of *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* was published in 1981; Volume II will be published in 1984.

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JOHN STOKES is a lecturer in English at the University of Warwick. His books include *Oscar Wilde*, 1978.

CHARLES TOMLINSON's *Poetry and Metamorphosis*, the Clark Lecture for 1982, has just been published.

PHILIP TOWLE's *Arms Control and East-West Relations* has just been published.

FRANK TUDOH's collection of stories, *Live Ball*, was published in 1978.

JENNIFER UGLOW is the editor of *Essays on Literature and Art* by Walter Pater, 1975.

W. H. WALSH's books include *Hegelian Ethics*, 1969, and *Kant's Critique of Metaphysics*, 1975.

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## Giraudoux on War

Sir, — I have not yet seen the National Theatre's revival of *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*, but Harold Hobson (Commentary, May 20) seems so assured as to its meaning that one feels an alternative view should be put.

Giraudoux's message is not the frightening (and irrational) one that war is caused by those who oppose it, but that, since the Trojan War came so near to being avoided, so might other wars if only people would share Hector's genuine love of peace and determination to avoid aggression. Given his choice of subject, it was hardly possible for Giraudoux to pretend the Trojan War had never taken place. But, until his final, uncharacteristic slip, Hector's march has been one of triumph; even Ulysses agrees to give peace a chance. The message of the play is one of optimism, of appeasement, which was why Claudel wrote of it in his diary: "Cette apologie de la lâcheté et de la paix à tout prix est répugnante." It was not until *Electre*, two years later, that Giraudoux gave way to the pessimism that saw war as inevitable, even indeed a necessary evil.

Incidentally, why the pedantic emphasis, in the National Theatre's publicity for its other current French show, on *De Musset*? He has recently noted De Montherlant in a Nottingham Playhouse programme. Are we soon to have De Montaigne and De Balzac?

P. R. FAWCETT.  
Department of French, University of Leicester.

## Arms Control

Sir, — I can understand Robert Scher (Letters, May 20) being irritated with me for missing the reference to his interview with Richard Burt, but otherwise he has no cause for complaint. I clearly did not misrepresent the argument of his book, *With Enough Shovels*, in my review (March 18) but he has managed, in a short letter, to misrepresent my position.

I did not use the phrase "ideological diversity" to describe members of the Reagan Administration. Ideologically all the key players are well right of centre. My point was only that degrees of pragmatism plus bureaucratic, economic and alliance pressures, and some straightforward practical problems, have produced a much more complicated picture than one might guess from Scher's book.

Richard Burt's current position exemplifies this fact. I would not accept that Burt's much-quoted article makes him indistinguishable from T. K. Jones or for that matter Richard Farle. There is a lot of difference between criticizing the past practice of arms control as intellectually confused and criticizing it as being a series of presents to the Soviet Union.

LAWRENCE FREEDMAN.  
Department of War Studies, King's College, Strand, London WC2.

## The Falklands War

Sir, — May I make a few comments on Geoffrey Wheatcroft's review of the literature of the Falklands campaign (May 13)?

The literary tradition of negotiation did not begin in this country with Johnson, noteworthy though his "Thoughts" on the Falklands proved to be. Swift's *Conduct of the Allies* proved to be the most effective masterpiece. Why? Not so much because he indulged in high-minded generalities about war and peace, nor because he was a great prose writer. As Michael Foot (himself a worthy exponent of the opposing "unconditional war" school) explained in his *Pen and the Sword* (1957), Swift put the warriors below the diplomats, their victories, their personal motives. Of course, he was lucky to have a ministry, at the time, which encouraged him to attack the Churchills.

Not to be enough to say that the tradition dwindled away with Cobden (his *Three Panics* is still relevant) and

the pro-Boers. What has dwindled has been the willingness to publish these arguments in wartime. Morley's Memorandum of 1914 and Lansdowne's Memorandum of 1916 were published after the "Great War". During the Second World War it was not so much a matter of direct government censorship as the moral pressures on publishers and, no doubt, their own convictions. These were eloquently explained in a long letter to my father in 1941 by Sir Geoffrey Faber, refusing to publish the "excluded memoranda" on a negotiated peace which had been privately circulated.

Then, again, the Falklands show suggests that voices like David Tinker's (*A Message from the Falklands*) tend to get drowned by the flood of instant campaign histories, good (Max Hastings), bad and indifferent. In the columns of the TLS and elsewhere we are still marching with Monty to Alamein and now even, with rekindled enthusiasm, across the Somme with Haig. Will it take a nuclear war to diminish the public demand — or the publishers' capacity to satisfy it?

ADRIAN LIDDELL HART.  
Stratford Lodge Cottage, Stroud, Gloucestershire.

## 'A Theory of History'

Sir, — Adam Morton's review (March 11) of Agnes Heller's *A Theory of History* is disappointing. Morton does not give Heller's book the serious reading it deserves, and settles instead for a rhetorical posture that allows him to dismiss Heller's work with an unjustified air of condescension.

To criticize Heller, Morton presents his own voice as the voice of rigour. Yet his reading of her work does not meet minimal standards of analytic precision. Morton mistakenly attributes Heller's description of the sixth stage of historical consciousness to the fifth; he quotes Heller out of context (as in the case of her analysis "Being now"), and he refuses to deal with the substance of her ideas. When Morton suggests that Heller believes that "not to think of the future in utopian terms... is to be radically at odds with some dominant and inescapable feature of our thought", he misses the point in Heller's interesting effort to root utopianism not in any ultimate human condition but in an analysis of civil society and in an individually based ethical commitment.

Unlike Morton, we believe that *A Theory of History* makes a significant contribution not only to the philosophy of the social sciences, but to contemporary efforts to create a normative foundation for the critique of advanced industrial societies. In this regard, Heller's criticism of the philosophies of history is particularly instructive. She argues that philosophies of history are particularly instructive in that they place human action "beyond good and evil". Perhaps the most thought-provoking part of her book is the argument that a socialist theory of history is opposed to a philosophy of history — a distinction Morton does not observe — should formulate the basis for an ethics of planetary responsibility.

Among contemporary radical social philosophers, Agnes Heller is one who has most consistently attempted to rework the foundations of the Marxist tradition in order to reconstruct a "democratic", anti-authoritarian and moral vision of socialism. The clarity and power of her moral and philosophical commitment is a source of inspiration for many of us — a fact recognized by the wider audience of the European reading public by the award of the Lessing Peace Prize to her. It is disappointing that Morton's positivistic and sceptically detached attitude has trivialized the work of an important thinker.

SEYLA BENHABIB.  
Department of Philosophy, Boston University, 745 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215.

ROBERT J. WILLIAMS.  
Simmons College, Boston.

## John Payne Collier

Sir, — Deway Ganzel (Letters, May 20) has replied to a few, out of many, of my strictures on his biography of John Payne Collier. I am sorry to have been so hard on his book, but I have to stand by what I said, and I deny the animus or "zeal" he detects in me to belabour his subject, rather than his treatment of it. I am not trying to convict Collier, if that were necessary or new, of forgery. I am trying to show that exonerating Collier, a distinguished scholar long held guilty of a multitude of fabrications, is a hard task, and that Ganzel has not done it; and that his presentation of evidence is very misleadingly selective with attendant distortions to biography (Collier's and others') and of textual analysis. As for my misapprehension of Ganzel's purposes, how, one asks, can the biographer of a man most celebrated as an alleged forger avoid the question of forgery itself? Either Collier was or he wasn't a forger. Ganzel says he must "leave to others" the proof or disproof of this — as if minor biography were a task for a committee — although he maintains throughout his book that Collier is blameless. Good Lord. Of course it is possible that Collier was a dupe of earlier forgers — if so, a surprisingly consistent dupe of uncharacteristically self-facing predecessors — but (again if so) no other scholar in literary history begins to approach his credulity.

Ganzel raises three main points I made to question, and these should certainly be answered:

(1) Cropping of marginalia in the Perkins Folio by an early binder: Ganzel said the Old Corrector's marginal emendations were shaved by a binder's knife prior to the pre-Collier binding, and I said they weren't. I said what were cut away, if anything, were irrelevant scribbles, and I should have added, scribbles in a different hand. Cropping of relevant marginalia would reinforce, if not even prove, part of Ganzel's argument. Cropping of irrelevant manuscript proves nothing. If Ganzel continues to dispute my physical description we had better call in independent arbiters at the Huntington Library, where the Perkins Folio is now housed.

(2) The tell-tale emendation in *Thus Andronicus*: Ganzel stated, categorically, that one smudged emendation reads "pleading" for "now", and that was, as I said, a potentially devastating allegation in terms of his argument. I examined the book itself, and I cannot read the effaced word — but I can make out enough of it to assert that it is not and never was "pleading". Now Ganzel does not address himself to this contradiction, but says we read the word "differently". Well, which is it to be? For we are not going to give the Old Corrector any points at all for coming up with a completely different emendation (a proposal which Ganzel incomprehensibly seems to think would abet his argument) when the Corrector is supposed to be copying from a printed text of 1594. Again, I suggest independent corroboration.

Finally, Ganzel's attitude toward numerical sophistry about the quantity of superior readings in Q1 — ninety per cent are irrelevant, twelve or so are substantive, six (including four he himself discounts as possibly coincidental) are supposedly picked up by the annotator. Bosh. If only a dozen are substantive, presumably those of K2-4, they total twenty-two lines of verse, and of them the Old Corrector adopts precisely two words, from about eighty-five, which correspond to Q1. Can we accept a scenario of an eighteenth-century reader, with such remarkable editorial ambitions, employing his original quarto and its variant text in such a fashion — a trifling word at a time; and no mind paid to the truly useful readings which abound in it?

(3) Malone's transcript of Henlow's diary: Ganzel was pretty silent about this in his book, but seems now to have considered its relevance. I did not mean to say that it was in Malone's hand; by "personal" I meant his property. Of course it is "of uncertain date", and it precedes Collier, and precedes Malone's death

in 1813, and that is what counts. That it omits the passages contaminated by forgery should not surprise us. But it does not lack all the pages on which the modern insertions would appear, had they been in the original manuscript, which is what Ganzel implies, and that is flat falsification. Shame on him. Anyway, what is Ganzel getting at? He calls the insertions "disputed", and everyone else calls them modern forgeries, regardless of Collier's guilt or innocence. What Malone's transcript provides is a *terminus post quem* for their composition.

Impugning error is the first duty of the reviewer. That I pay little attention to secondary materials which Ganzel labours is, inevitably, the result of review. I do not share Ganzel's high estimate of the testimony of Warner and Wellesley, two casual witnesses who saw the Perkins Folio (or some other folio) before Collier owned it, and report unspecified marginalia in it, as indeed most old books may exhibit. Although my list of additional forgeries unmentioned by Ganzel is "not novel or unique", as he says, it would certainly be novel to any reader of Ganzel's biography alone. The suggestion that it was compiled only to convict John Payne Collier is silly; it was compiled to remedy a defect. No one is going to write a brand-new study of Collier very soon, and the present biographer remains chiefly responsible for the state of information about his subject, haphazard and misleading as I think it to be.

ARTHUR FREEMAN.  
5 Brynston Square, London W1.

## Language Acquisition

Sir, — If I may reply to P. N. Johnson-Laird (Letters, May 20), my reasons for not finding the learning of a first language the problem which he insists it must be are that both vocal signalling and the interpretation of one thing as the sign of another already occur, unproblematically, in animal behaviour; and that human speech, and indeed the conceptual thought which language underpins, develop in a complex but perfectly natural and intelligible way out of these two basic semantic processes, the evolutionary origins of which were clarified by Darwin and Pavlov quite some time ago. To trace the complex development of language from such simple beginnings would clearly need more space than a letter to the TLS. But if the theory of language here suggested seems extravagant, it may be worth considering how the complex fabric of modern mathematics developed out of such humdrum activities

## 'Milena'

Sir, — It is sad to see that in the Kafka centenary year both Maggie Ross in her novel *Milena* and your reviewer L. T. Lyham (May 16) can get away with misspelling Milena Jesenská, Kafka's friend Milena Jesenská.

PETER BROD.  
10 Richborne Terrace, London SW8.

## Author, Author

Competition No 125  
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than June 24. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that, the most correct answers will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 125" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on July 1.

1 He got a terrible clap of a Black handsome wench that lay in Aze-vay, Westminster, whom he thought on when he speaks of Dolga in — which cost him his nose, with which unlucky mischance many wits were too cruelly bold; eg Sir John Menla, Sir John Denham, etc.

2 His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin good-humoured and round; but his nose, the ruler of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble; nothing — like what he has done!

3 I always thought that Jesus Christ was a snubby or I should not have worshipped him; if it had thought he had been one of those long spindle nosed rascals.

as counting sheep and measuring land, which most certainly came first.

I do not think one should cite "authorities" to prove the alleged intractability of hogus problems, in the manner of medieval theologians. But if he must, Johnson-Laird could have chosen better. Chomsky is a rum choice to illustrate the "problem" of language acquisition, since his view is that infants do not strictly learn language at all, but that a ghostly universal language is embedded in their genes and that this enables them to hook on to whatever form of speech they chance to be exposed to. Why we later lose this miraculous faculty and don't all end up as polyglots is of course "explained" by a further improbable hypothesis.

Nor does Hilary Putnam quite fit the bill. Putnam is a humane thinker who resists the notion that linguistic philosophy must be a highly technical affair. He also made a heroic effort to dispel the metaphysical fog which has surrounded mathematical philosophy for over a century. What we need is someone to do the same for language theory. To take up Johnson-Laird's generously worded challenge, I think this can be arranged.

T. P. WALDRON.  
Wolfson College, Cambridge.

## Greek Cuisine

Sir, — Nutritive or not (Letters, May 20), cockerles' testicles had their place in the Greek cuisine, if we are to believe Alexis Zorbas, who, in Kazantzakis's novel, tells the story of the banquet given by a Cretan monastery to the high commissioner, Prince George. The other guests were served meat. But before the Prince was placed a bowl of what appeared to be hatched bean soup. At first hesitant, he soon emptied the bowl and licking his lips said "What delicious beans!" "They are not beans", replied the abbot, "We castrated every cock in the eparchy."



# Command performance

Hugh Brogan

ROBERT H. FERRELL (Editor)

The Eisenhower Diaries  
445pp. Norton. £15.25.  
0 393 01432 0

Robert Ferrell is a lucky man. When Harry Truman's private diary was to be edited for publication, Professor Ferrell was asked to do the job. It was not yet out of the way when he was called to the Eisenhower Library at Abilene, Kansas, to edit Ike's diary. And only a few weeks ago it was reported that he was "examining and collating" the letters from Harry Truman to his wife which have turned up in Independence, Mo. No doubt he will publish them soon.

He deserves his good fortune: he is an experienced historian and a competent editor. Perhaps he has pushed his luck a little, however, with these Eisenhower diaries. There are far too many signs of haste in the editing. The one which would, I think, have caused confusion between the two General Jacksons. On May 3, 1955 Ike noted, with military piety, that it was ninety-two years since Jackson was shot. He was thinking of Stonewall at the battle of Chancellorsville. Professor Ferrell supposes him to be alluding to the attempted assassination of Andrew, in 1835, and writes a long note on that assumption. It is the most glaring of too many blunders. I found myself thinking that at least the typographical errors should have been put right for the British edition, until I realized that there is no true British edition. The diaries were first published in the United States in 1961. Perhaps they did not sell as well as the publishers had hoped. At any rate, Messrs Norton have simply dumped on the British market (or perhaps I should say, on British literary editors) some spare copies of the American edition, no doubt hoping that the second launching will improve sales. It is good marketing, but bad manners. *Convent enquirer*. I could furnish quite a list of small but tiresome editorial mistakes. They must have been noticed by some of the American reviewers. I do not think that Messrs Norton have any business sending the unreviewed first edition over to England for notice, not

at least, in 1983; nor for charging £15.25, for a book whose dollar price was \$19.95.

Yet it is easy to sympathize with the publishers for the fix they were in, if not for their method of getting out of it. Ferrell has done all he could to make the Eisenhower diaries palatable to the common reader and almost all he could to make them useful to scholars; but there is no denying that they will be found heavy going by all except those with a serious professional interest in Eisenhower and his times. The book does not have the makings of a brisk best-seller. For one thing, it is not really a diary. It seems to have been begun as a unit diary in the Philippines in 1935, when Major Eisenhower was General MacArthur's chief of staff. It soon became a private document in which Ike could let off steam about his posturing superior. As it developed over the years (sometimes written in longhand, sometimes typed, sometimes dictated) it became an *aide-memoire* in which Eisenhower could record incidents he might later need to remember accurately, or his understanding of problems as they arose, or his estimate of colleagues and subordinates, or his own views at dramatic moments in his story (the memorandum he wrote on the night before D-Day is especially interesting in this respect). It helped him to clarify his thoughts, and might be useful in later years, whether for lecturers at staff colleges (he rightly thought that his experience as commander of the Allied armies in the West was of great professional and historical interest) or for himself, if he ever wrote his memoirs, as eventually he did. But he never tried to keep a day-to-day record of his life, or felt moved to write about anything except his professional concerns. There is nothing about his reading, his pastimes, his financial affairs, or sex (the one reference to his alleged mistress is in a most unloverlike strain). For Ike, his memo book was a business document.

Precisely there lies its fascination and value for historians. Nothing clutters the picture of a soldier and then a statesman grappling with history. There are large omissions: almost nothing was written in 1952, the most decisive year in Eisenhower's life. So we do not get any light on one of his few base actions: his failure, during the election campaign, to defend General

Marshall against Joe McCarthy (the owed everything to Marshall). What is included more than makes up for the lacunae (and for the fact that there are suspiciously few references to Richard Nixon in the heavily-abridged post-Presidential pages). From now on anyone who wishes to understand Ike will have to turn first to this book. It is an impressively intelligent and honest self-portrait.

It lacks the charm that Harry Truman's hot temper and unguarded style gave to his own memo book. Ike was almost never unguarded, once he had got away from MacArthur. At one point he comments on the struggle he had waged over the years to control his temper. He succeeded magnificently, and thus freed himself to analyse dispassionately whatever concerned him. Ferrell quite rightly stresses that this analytical strain is what gives the book its value, for it corrects the tediously bland impression left by Ike's public papers. The man of the diaries is anything but bland. Rather, he is formidable.

In some respects, to be sure, he was endearingly simple. When in 1949 he had to record some fulsome compliments from Thomas E. Dewey, who was trying to talk him into running for the Presidency, he said "the mere doing of such things almost makes me dive under the table" (The flattery failed of its purpose). In another place he remarks that "my family and America [are] the only real passions of my life". Among the members of his family who meant most to him was his younger brother Milton - he thought Milton the best qualified of all Americans to be President. He found it easy to like people - Harry Truman, for example (it is a pity they fell out). Even when he had to record strong disapproval, and even, once or twice, dislike, he never did so in an ignoble, petty, personal fashion. He saw himself as the great conciliator, the prophet of the middle-of-the-road. The only trace of pique in all these pages occurs when it seems to him that he is being written down as too supine a military leader. He is careful to record his claim to be an enterprising, energetic, attacking commander, instancing his role in North Africa and his responsibility for the Salerno landings (I leave it to others to settle whether this was really a decision to be proud of). All in all, it is easy to see

why so many people liked Ike; and easy to forget that one did not always do so oneself.

The dominant impression is of enormous competence. There was a story put about during Eisenhower's Presidency that he owed his success to his staff, especially to General Bedell Smith, who did the work while the chief played golf. Ike confirms this impression to the extent that he places the greatest possible value on a good staff, and is generous in his tributes to the men and women who worked for him; but no reader can doubt that his was the master hand. For one thing, it is not easy to build up a good staff unless you know exactly what to do with it, and are a sound judge of men. Ike's judgement of people was almost faultless. Again and again he sums up a character with a neatness that historians will be hard put to it to equal. For example:

(11 June 1943) General Montgomery is a very able, dynamic type of army commander. I personally think that the only thing he needs is a strong immediate commander.

An elaborate analysis of Winston Churchill in 1953 is too long to quote; but in its mixture of sympathetic insight and icy common sense it is absolutely devastating. Ike could simply see no reason in the old hero's yearnings for an Anglo-American special relationship to settle the destinies of the world. Later, after the reader has probably decided that Eisenhower's overblown admiration for John Foster Dulles is one of his blind spots, we come across the following:

(24 January 1958) I sense a difference with Foster Dulles (in the approach to the Soviets). His is a lawyer's mind. He consistently adheres to a very logical explanation of these difficulties in which we find ourselves with the Soviets, and in doing so - with his lawyer's mind - he shows the steps and actions that are bad on their part; we seek to show that we are doing this decent and just thing. Of course we have got to have a concern and respect for fact and reiteration of official position, but we are likewise trying to "seek friends and influence people".

Therefore, I sometimes question the practice of becoming a sort of international prosecuting attorney. As this passage suggests, there is

very little comfort in this book for the present Republican administration. Eisenhower was a conservative of a type now nearly extinct. His Kansas boyhood instilled in him the same attitudes that Iowa imposed on the young Hubert Hoover. No wonder that he had such a respect for Hoover and Hoover's ideas, which gave him an old-fashioned air even in 1952. He was deeply suspicious of the welfare state, thinking (this Army man, cocooned in the service from West Point to the grave) that it undermined the godly American values of self-help and independence; he was positively reverential towards businessmen; he deplored the stretch extension of the federal bureaucracy, and was profoundly committed to thrift in government and the balanced budget, as means to preserving a stable currency. He parted company with Hoover only over foreign affairs ("March 1951). I am forced to believe he's getting senile. . . .") Hoover was an isolationist, but all Ike's professional training and experience had conditioned him to think that the United States must play a part of leadership in the world if its vital interests were to be protected, especially against the advance of Communism.

The Reagan administration parades its belief in most of these attitudes, but its actions belie it, especially in its readiness to shovel out money for military hardware. The last soldier-President of the United States had no illusion that this was the road to real security. In an undated memorandum, which Professor Ferrell tentatively assigns to December, 1956, he wrote:

During my term of office, unless there is some technical or political development that I do not foresee, or a marked inflationary trend in the economy (which I will battle to the death - I will not approve any obligatory or expenditure authorities for the Defense Department that exceed something on the order of \$38.5 billion . . .

Fine words, of an all too familiar type; but Ike meant what he said and kept surprisingly close to his goal. In 1960, his last year in office, the Pentagon spent just under \$44 billion. Total federal outlays exactly balanced federal revenues, at \$92 billion. These were the days.

nothing in he needed the white Southern bloc vote.

The way the letters have been chosen is interesting. Robert S. McElvaine has chosen from a sampling of 15,000 out of a public archive of 15,000,000 letters. He has written a brief introduction to the period and has arranged the letters according to the various concerns. The edition is meticulous and the presentation admirable. The printing is of high quality. Yet the very beauty and exactitude of the book take away from the anguish and illiteracy of the letters. It is as if a Utilitarian clerk were drafting a memorandum in cursive about the undesirability of feeding the Irish during the Great Hunger. The fine details of the letters are lost. "We are pitiful objects here," one letter reads, "in this world of sorry trying to do the best we can."

McElvaine makes no attempt to relate this testimony to broader themes - this is the raw matter of future analysis. He undercuts the value of the ordinary Americans, particularly the work of the Lynds in Muncie and the three Federal Writers' Project books, by *These Are Our Lives*. He also discounts the indirect testimony of novelists of the time such as Steinbeck and Dos Passos, as well as the evidence of hundreds of documentary and films, through which the people also spoke, in their way.

Finally, these are the letters only of those who could and did write to the government. As McElvaine points out, to write a letter at all to the President was still an act of hope. It was that hope which sustained the mass of Americans through the Great Depression.

## Looking out for wholeness

Charles Tomlinson

ELIZABETH BISHOP

The Complete Poems 1927-1979  
283pp. Chatto and Windus. £10.95.  
0 7011 2694 9

English readers began to make the acquaintance of Elizabeth Bishop with the appearance, from Chatto and Windus, of her selected *Poems* in 1956. The same publishers have now honoured their early commitment with *The Complete Poems*, which splendidly vindicates them. F. W. Bateson once described them to me as "Marianne Moore and water". Reading these lucid, witty and sometimes sad poems, I wondered how often this sort of dismissal had slowed down the spread of her reputation here.

Marianne Moore, whom she first met in 1934, was clearly decisive for Elizabeth Bishop's work. Bishop did not, however, water down that stringent and humane tone, but learned from it in a way that words like "influence" do not greatly help us to understand. Behind Miss Moore was the prose of Ruskin. It suggested to her, perhaps, that if only Ruskin's wit could be rescued from his eloquence, the twentieth-century poet could write of nature free of the egotistical, sublime, Ruskin wit? Take his pine trees - "such like the shadow of the one beside it - upright, fixed, spectral, as troops of ghosts standing on the walls of Hades, not knowing each other. . . . The rock itself looks bent and shattered beside them. - fragile, weak, inconsistent, compared to their dark energy of delicate life, and monotony of enchanted pride - unnumbered, unconquerable." The shadow at the beginning of this passage, that fantasy of the ghosts, the pre-Lawrentian "dark energy of delicate life" all pull against the miscoloured organ against the "unnumbered, unconquerable". It is her collage poem "An Octopus" Moore shies away at all this with:

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Back, behind us, the dignified full firs begin.

Blush, associating with their shadows.

A million Christmas trees stand waiting for Christmas. The water seems

suspended above the rounded grey and blue-grey stones.

I have seen it over and over, the same sea, the same

slightly, indifferently swinging above the stones . . .

This is like a darker, post-imagist, version of the kind of writing one finds in the prose of Sarah Orne Jewett's little masterpiece, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Yet the suggestion of threat in it is something that makes

Miss Bishop's evocation of northern latitudes and dying sea-side towns, of Maine, New Brunswick and Cape Breton, different from Jewett and also from the pastoral atmosphere of a similar setting in Moore's "The Steeple-Jack". There, the hero, the student, the steeple-jack, each in his way, is at home. For Bishop people are only provisionally at home. When she travels south (Nova Scotia and Brazil are her two extremes) she asks

Is it lack of imagination what makes us to imagined places [ . . . ]? Should we have stayed at home,

wherever that may be?

Nearer home, at Cape Breton, the place is depopulating, there is an idiot, a dwarf dressmaker, a student who, unlike Moore's Ambrose, is a morose giant. Not that Bishop lays all this on with Faulkner's palette knife. But hovering over her northern sea-vistas and her Brazilian jungles there is a hint of the darkness about to fall, a margin of the sad and the inexplicable that refuses to be exorcized by her brave wit. At times the brilliant surface of her work reminds one of Hemingway, the Hemingway of *Big Two-Hearted River* (she, also, was an enthusiastic fisher). Style never becomes for her, as it did for him, a ritual of self-congratulation, though there are one or two Martian indulgences. Yet one senses that her objectivity is governed by enormous reticence, and her precision comes from an effort at self-control that refuses to be more explicit.

It is curious that *The Complete Poems* does not contain the long prose section in *The Village* from her third volume *Questions of Travel*. This can hardly be due to a policy of excluding the prose, for we have half a dozen uncollected prose pieces gathered together here. In *The Village* derives from her own childhood. Born in 1911 - the year of her father's death and her

mother's committal to an asylum - she is brought up "in the village" in Nova Scotia. Here "in the middle of the view", we are told, "like one hand of a clock, pointing straight up, is the steeple of the Presbyterian Church". A background of pain and alienation (the mother comes from the mental institution and disappears again) contrasts with a bright particularized foreground seen through the child's eyes and this, to some extent, shuts back the pain. The mother's scream is driven out by the clang with which Nature the blacksmith shapes a horseshoe:

Nature is shaping a horseshoe. Oh, beautiful pure sound! It turns everything else to silence.

On first reading *Questions of Travel* years ago, I felt there was some evasion in this elected silence. But, since then, the strip-tease of Lady Lazarus and other, less skillful, stunts have made me wonder whether there was not a justifiable degree of self-protection in it. The inclusion of "Poems Written in Youth" in *The Complete Poems* bears out this feeling. Among these very interesting pieces - some written in the poet's sixteenth year - recurs a devastated sense of inner division - in the elf, for example, who appears there and whose "singing split the sky in two". This poem, and several more, could well have been the results of merely juvenile Angst. But the theme of division is taken up again in later work, as in "The Weed", distantly but distinctly modelled on George Herbert's "Love Unknown". In "Love Unknown" a hard heart is dipped in a bloody foot, supplied in a cauldron marked "Affliction" and pricked into new life by thorns. A voice at the end of the poem interprets all this and the saving nature of his experiences to the poet. At the close of "The Weed", the interpreting voice offers less reassurance:

The weed stood in the severed heart. "What are you doing there?" I asked. It lifted its head all dripping wet (with my own thoughts) and answered then: "I grow." It said "but to divide your heart again."

In "Sonnet", which comes over thirty years later and in the last year of her life, she is still pursued by this theme:

Caught - the bubble in the spirit-level - a creature divided, and the compass needle wobbling and wavering, undecided . . .

Poems like this are peripheral to the main body of Elizabeth Bishop's work, and the pain which brought them forth

external to the self and consciousness, and also malevolently



## Wolfing it down

John Stokes

LINDA BLANDFORD

America on Five Vallum a Day  
224pp. Methuen. £7.95.  
0 413 51840 X

ROY BLOUNT

One Fell Soup: Or I'm Just a Bug on the  
Windshield of Life  
278pp. Methuen. £8.50.  
0 413 52620 8

"But enough about me, let's talk about you... tell me, how do you feel about me?" This New York joke, which Linda Blandford feels is wearing thin, owes a good deal to Tom Wolfe, progenitor of "The Me Decade". So, it must be said, do Blandford's own reports to the *Guardian*, now collected in *America on Five Vallum a Day*. A tendency to see Manhattan through Wolfe's eyes shows in her weakness for brand-name identification. This can be a challenge to her British readers. Londoners might fathom the "gay young men in their Calvins", those who rifle through *New Yorker* ads should be able to crack the "Ralph Lauren-odorized, Bill Blass-bedded studio dwellers", but parents capable of deciphering the precise status of children in "muted Osh Kosh overalls" who possess a "genuine, miniature, Cosco potty with authentic working loo seat" deserve to go straight to the top of the Manhattan upper-middle class.

Nothing is stranger to the British—exceeding even the brutalities of climate and language—than New York's homage to food. Blandford lists the menu for the 6 am Breakfast Special at the Greek place on West 86th, the constituents of Louis Lichman's Hungarian studelet (apple, cheese, cherry, nut, poppyseed and cabbage), pays tribute to Bernie Katz's chocolate éclairs, Herb Grossinger's *rigolanci*, Magda Honti's caramel cake and the prodigious desserts at Panarella's. It's easier for Americans to explain us according to our diet (a resigned phlegm brought on by the

phenomenological disorder of tepid beer, cold toast, soft chips and thin meat) than it is for us to decode their much more elaborate gastronomic language. Smart New York consumes its origins and devours its dreams. "Manhattan's national dish," writes Blandford, is the croissant, redolent of sun-dappled attic rooms in Paris, lovers and romance. A fantasy, of course, but then the croissant is "a Me food—to each her own, nothing to share, and no one else to demand the best bits". Likewise, for those whose egos need no enlarging, merely a rinse, Perrier water has replaced the Martini, visually indistinguishable but vitamin-packed. If New York tells you that you should be whatever you want to be, then it follows that what you want to be, you eat.

Thankfully, one's worries that Blandford's Manhattan might be an island invented by Wolfe, laid out like a good food guide, are quickly dispelled by her finely braced *Guardian* conscience. Her first social encounter is a meeting of her neighbours on the Upper West Side: "where the liberals live". Its purpose is

to protest against the threatened invasion by a post psychiatric socialization facility for formerly hospitalized psychotics. The "liberals" are worried about their property values, and Blandford is rightly repelled. Though she allows herself to observe that "in a city in which the illusion of its advertising is mistaken for its reality, those who muddle along in the unkempt and ordinary way know themselves to be failures", she repeatedly discovers, in her forays around the city, that this isn't necessarily so. The arrogant joggers in Central Park may "interpret the survival of the fittest far too literally", but then there's transportation engineer Irwin Yatzkan, whose performance in the Marathon brought him back from terminal depression. Valerie, the Fishlady once chained to the deep freeze by raiders, throws a neighbourhood party. "There's a lot more here than fish," she says. There are for instance the members of the New York City Housing Authority Orchestra, mostly black or Hispanic, who play Tchikovsky in the projects as a gesture of solidarity with their fellow victims of

cruelly misjudged urban policies. Meanwhile, the 150 members of the Gay Men's Chorus, in grey and burgundy tuxedos, are answering the Moral Majority with a concert at Lincoln Center.

Blandford's best writing reflects her willingness to look and listen, her insistence that when the city's elite are hellbent on abolishing middle age, there's all the more reason to worry about the very young and the very old. She comes to learn that among the poor of New York an unkempt muddle can hide real success.

Tom Wolfe could also be responsible for the noisy excesses of Roy Blount, who, like other New Journalists, approaches the typewriter as if it were a drum kit, devising paragraphs that break on the offbeat, adjectival crescendos, italic trills and short-sentence riffs. About a third of his collection is taken up with sport. Baseball, bowls and ballooning no doubt require their own vernacular, even when it's composed of "FOOP, THWAP and SSNK", but Blount also writes about food and women, and here his priorities are perfectly clear: Great legs, cherry lips, and deltas aglow,

And breasts you could nibble and make them to grow...

And through the whole business I keep saying, "Look, it's all very nice, but can someone cook?"

Eloquent at the table, Blount talks dirty everywhere else. Remembering Mailer's refusal to write for the *New Yorker* because they wouldn't let him use the word "shit", Blount, whose outlets include not only that reformed magazine but *Eastern Airliner Pastimes*, *Organic Gardening* and a dozen others, uses it a good deal, bringing a new literalness to logorrhoea. Not to be outdone by Wolfe, who once devoted an essay to the Manhattan meanings of what we here know as "le mot Craig Raine", Blount reflects at length on what Hemingway (strangely decorous) dubbed "cojones". It's a clever piece, "gross" in the current campus mode, yet erudite. But despite further signed repressed sensibility in his comments on Woody Allen and Steve Martin, and some unexpectedly pedantic points about newspaper style manuals, Blount soon gets back to the catfish, grits and turnip greens. When the choco-chips are down, he's all mouth.

## Camp follower

James Campbell

JOYCE JOHNSON

Minor Characters  
262pp. Collins Harvill. £7.95.  
0 00 272511 8

Joyce Johnson climbed into bed one night in 1957 with a likeable, immature, heavy-drinking hobo, and woke up with a celebrity. What happened in between was the publication in the *New York Times* of a review of *On the Road*, the first novel by Jack Kerouac (as opposed to "John", who had published one six years earlier). Agents and reporters started knocking on his door at breakfast, and by lunchtime it was, in a sense, all over: Jack was smashed and answering questions, with the drunken incoherence which was to become a trade mark, about the meaning of "beat" and the significance of "the road".

"What was it really like, Jack? When did you first become aware of this generation? And how many people are involved in it? Is America going to go Beat? Are you telling us now to turn our backs on our families and look for kicks?"

"Hey," Jack said. "Have some champagne."

They were investigating the birth of the Beat Generation, unaware that it was, for literary purposes at least, already dead. For Jack, there were to be few more kicks and no more "road"—aeroplane only, from now on—until he died in front of the television set, under his mother's hawkish eye, in 1969. He had continued to write, but most of the books which followed *On the Road* were written before that morning's impromptu publication party.

While the first glasses were being filled, "Joyce", Kerouac's occasional girlfriend, the one who "always understood and always forgave, was in the kitchen making coffee and having doubts about her own role in the coming drama of the Beat Generation. She was right, of course, as past experience told her. It was a boy's game: Kerouac and Cassidy, Ginsberg and Orlovsky, Burroughs and his Tanglewood boys...

The myth of the freedom-seeking hero and his outcast sidekick is one of the most persistent in American fiction, from Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking and Chingachook, to Huck Finn and Jim, right up to the Lone Ranger and Tonto. By living it as well as writing it, Kerouac and his friends became a legend.

*Minor Characters* is an attempt to tell the story from the side of the girl who makes the coffee and stays at home when the boys ride the range. Joyce Johnson cites, with a laconic bitterness, recent efforts by the novelist John Clellon Holmes to match

the male characters in his novel, *Go*, with their originals, while admitting that the "centres of young women were mere amalgams. Ms Johnson's purpose is to reveal the centre of a least one of them.

The Kerouac-Ginsberg-Burroughs legend has been the making of many books. Under her own name of Glassman, Joyce Johnson was one of the contributors to a compilation of interviews with friends of Kerouac, which was published four years ago. She was one of the few who retained a sense of reality in an otherwise indulgent exercise "His mother made this big meal that everybody ate", she told the idolatrous interviewers, "except Jack. He ended up with his head in his plate." *Minor Characters* better written than Carolyn Cassady's *Heartbeat*, although in places it is self-consciously lyrical, and also apt to rely on jargon: "hipster-angel Herbie Huncke", "naked, that angelic word".

The book is composed, in effect, of two parts: there is the story of Joyce Glassman growing up in a polite New York suburb, struggling against her parents, coming to terms with nature's surprises (periods, sex), selling her first novel at the age of twenty-one; and is counterpoint, the tale of Jack and Allen; eventually, Allen arranges a blind date—and Joyce meets Jack.

Whatever else it is, then, this is not memoir in the mode of "Jack Kerouac as I knew him..." In the end, however, one's suspicions that "the boys" are his *raison d'être* are unallayed. Perhaps this is only because the stories of her own upbringing, the tedious charming at first, are at length (tiresome and contrived) Joyce Johnson has not the literary power to transform the mundane details of fussy mothers, severe fathers, discouraging teachers, and fat friends into anecdotes with universal appeal. Naturally, then, one's ears prick up—as her publishers must have done—when Kerouac enters. What was he really like? Did he always need to be free? How was he a beat?

In the act of filling in the comic, Joyce Johnson has also given us a legend, a bit of extra mileage. "As a lover he wasn't fierce but only brotherly and somewhat reticent," he told her about sex orgies, however, omitting to mention that he was the only one who had kept his clothes on. At bedtime, he sometimes roomed with his sleeping bag to another room. A good deal of the time, he is moving pointlessly from place to place; Joyce thinks of joining him sometimes, but he has already left. Had he had the courage to turn his back on America's desperate appetite for media stars (see which we've taught) Kerouac might have written other books as good as *On the Road*. Instead, there are the *Minor Characters*, and all the holy rolling champagne, and all the holy rolling phantoms he set in motion gradually coming home to roost. We could do with a book about that: a closer look at the delusions of these hipster-angels.

## Three poems by John Ashbery

### Background Music

I like wallpaper to have a white background  
With small, cursive flowers (preferably blue)  
Swarming from floor to ceiling.  
I like small patterns to cover the large areas,  
Like pages of exclamation marks.

I like the furniture to be dark and discrete lumps  
Here and there in the unpublishable gloom  
Of rooms which may be suddenly alight  
In the fullness of time. Some gracious,  
Open-ended purgatory, in which sitters  
Sit, until the clamor  
Of the amusement bell summons them to breakfast,  
To classrooms where attendance is kept.

For there is time enough  
For the light in which the truth shall be voided,  
The broad, untidy light of day  
That adds no jot  
Yet miraculously subtracts all away.

When their music is heard there are those  
Who having heard it, clap, and those  
Who have not heard it and who clap again  
And again, for hardest drive  
Insures success in performances just past:  
A sequential doing dearer with knowing.  
The applause breaks loose like bunting  
Borne on gentle draughts upward, pleases to skim  
The tops of the near buildings whose height  
Is limited by law.  
For one who likes clouds, fields,  
And the sublime music of Stenhammar,  
Ordinary faded daylight is not enough.  
A weighted backdrop streaked with the business of day  
Plummets and stops, its aftermath a kind of sway  
Handed over by the weather from the kind of day it was.

Think of all the patterns that might have been—  
Just one view of one brook, for instance—and how  
The jewelled scaffolding in the walls  
Of the attic-bedroom holds them all at bay  
With the night sky; how it bears gracefully  
The weight of billions of light-years at each pressure point  
So that the small occurrences can follow the slanting  
Paths of its development to the point just beyond it,  
And with flair,  
Despite predictions of failure.

As playing was a project, it now comes easily  
To address strictures of the day in the tones  
Of purest expectancy within the blood;  
To warn of generations still to come,  
Of transparent fists and ploughshares shaken  
And a fat lun  
Cushioned behind a hill in late August  
To end the rebuts.

Look, it's bleeding now.

### Trefoil

Imagine some tinkling curiosity from the years back—  
The fashions aren't old enough yet to look out of fashion.  
It is a perfect picture of windows, with trees  
Of two minds half-caught in their buzz and luster,  
The froth of everyone's ideas as personal and skimpy as ever.

The windows taught us one thing: a great, square grief  
Not alleviated or distracted by anything, since the pattern  
Must establish itself before it can grow old, cannot weather nicely  
Keeping a notion of squirrels and peacocks to punctuate  
Chapters of fine print as they are ground down, growing ever finer  
To assume the strict title of dust someday. No, there is no room now  
For oceans, blizzards: only night, with fingers of steel  
Pressing the lost lid, searching forever unquietly the mechanism  
To unclasp all this into warbled sunlight, the day  
The gaunt person comes to ask for your hand. Nothing is flying,  
Sinking; it is as though the resistance of all things  
To the earth were so much casual embroidery, years  
In the making, barely glimpsed at the appointed time.

Through it all a stiffness persists  
Of someone who had changed her mind, moved by your arguments  
And waiting till the last possible moment to confess it,  
To let you know you were wanted, even a lot, more than you could  
Imagine. But all that is, as they say, another story.

## Thank You for not Cooperating

Down in the street there are ice-cream parlors to go to  
And the pavement is a nice, bluish slate-gray. People laugh a lot.  
Here you can see the stars. Two lovers are singing  
Separately, from the same rooftop: "Leave your change behind,  
Leave your clothes, and go. It is time now.  
It was time before too, but now it is really time.  
You will never have enjoyed storms so much.  
As on these hot sticky evenings that are more like August  
Than September. Stay. A fake wind wills you to go  
And out there on the stormy river witness buses bound for Connecticut,  
And tree-business, and all that we think about when we stop thinking.  
The weather is perfect, the season unclear. Weep for your going  
But also expect to meet me in the near future, when I shall disclose  
New, better adventures, and you shall continue to think of me."

The wind dropped, and the lovers  
Sang no more, communicating each to each in the tedium  
Of self-expression, and the shore curled up and became liquid  
And so the celebrated latent began. And how shall we, people  
All unused to each other and to our own business, explain  
It to the shore if it is given to us  
To circulate there "in the near future" the way of our coming  
And why we were never here before? The counter-proposals  
Of the guest-stranger impede our construing of ourselves as  
Person-objects, the ones we know would get here  
Somewhere, but we can remember as easily as the day we were born  
The nuggets we passed on the way and how the day bled  
And the night too on hearing us, though we spoke only our childish  
Ideas and never tried to impress anybody even when somewhat older.



## Argument by example

Michael Mason

ERIC WARNER and GRAHAM HUGHES (Editors)

*Strangeness and Beauty: An Anthology of Aesthetic Criticism 1840-1910*

Volume One: Ruskin to Swinburne. 285pp.

0 521 23895 J

Volume Two: Pater to Symonds. 303pp.

0 521 23896 X

Cambridge University Press. Each volume £25 (paperback, £7.95).

It is a familiar fact that there are no total revolutions in artistic and literary culture. Revolutions always involve an element of continuity at some level, even if it is only at the rhetorical level, because they always take the form of a more or less extreme twist imparted to something traditional. Hence it is possible, if you are obstinate enough, to argue away any particular revolution. The question for the non-obstinate must be: at what level of continuity is it appropriate to stop emphasizing the innovations brought in by a new wave of artists and critics, and start resisting claims made for their originality? The editors of this two-volume anthology believe that some resistance of this sort is needed in the assessment of English culture at the end of the last century. Their selection of literary and art criticism and theory from 1831 onwards has a polemical intent which is set out in the introduction and commentary. It is thus an unusual sort of anthology: an anthology *à l'usage*. Its drift is not, however, the one stated on the jacket:

the editors wish to repudiate the view . . . that the explosion in the arts in the first decades of the twentieth century represents a clear and decisive break with the aesthetic speculation and practice of the previous century.

Perhaps, the Cambridge University Press thinks that this line of argument would have been more interesting than the one the editors actually pursue: that continuity exceeds discontinuity in the transition from early Victorian to late Victorian aesthetic culture. Among the chief bridging or linking ideas are the following: "the autonomy of art within its own realm; the poetry of the senses; the working of poetry through the image and through music."

So the scope of this collection is

approximately that of a well-known study (which had the more orthodox form of a continuous literary-critical discussion) by one of the editors, Graham Hough's *The Last Romantics*. But it ranges wider and claims more than the earlier book did. Professor Hough describes in *The Last Romantics* how, to him, Yeats's circle in the 1890s "seemed to owe almost everything to Pater and the pre-Raphaelites, and from them I was inevitably led back to Ruskin. At this point I came to a stop. Now, with the help of Eric Warner, he doesn't come to a stop at Ruskin any longer. Hallam's 1831 essay 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry' is here, along with Poe and Gautier. In the introduction it is claimed that

the sort of intense aesthetic contemplation which Ruskin, Pater, and Whistler were to champion had been enshrined long before in such great romantic poems as Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn".

This broken, disparate grouping of writers is not what Hough might have been expected to notice once he saw past Ruskin. He and Mr Warner write that Ruskin was "one of the first" who "attacked the destruction of spiritual values in the burgeoning materialism of his day", a theme transmitted to Pater and his school. But such attacks were a great commonplace of early Victorian culture. Perhaps "one of the first" is a perfunctory nod towards such un-Pateresque figures as Carlyle and Dickens.

Even in the mid-Victorian period when a line of descent of "aesthetic" ideas can be more continuously traced, it is an awkward project making out that this should eclipse the many different attitudes that separate, for example, Rossetti, Morris and Swinburne. The editors resort rather frequently to capacious descriptions like "developments and transformations" in order to forge their links, and they often have to pitch the acknowledged level of "transformation" so high that these links are virtually emptied of significance. William Morris and early Pre-Raphaelitism, in particular, press the idea of "aesthetic criticism" to an extreme point of comprehensiveness. The head-note on Morris, as a matter of fact, constitutes a satisfying little essay on him, and throughout the collection the editors exhibit knowledge, affection and sensitivity where their chosen texts are concerned — which makes the framework of "aesthetic criticism" even more

dispensable as a rationale for the collection.

This is not, however, to disparage the novel concept of this anthology as a general procedure for cultural-historical argument. Any such argument will be a mixture of statements and evidence; this collection may be seen as simply altering the conventional balance between the two, and doing so, moreover, in the direction of intellectual fairness: since the larger body of examples should enable the more uniformed reader to assess the justice of the editors' argument better. Or this might have been the result. The fact is that the configuration of Victorian culture makes it quite easy to give a misleading picture despite a copious display of materials. To start with, one may simply omit certain figures. The absence of Carlyle has been noted; Arnold is not included either (even though the first slightly strained claims of "development and transformation" from this critic to *fin de siècle* values are offered by Pater and Wilde themselves). The prolixity of some writers is a help. A great diversity of

opinions may be extracted from Ruskin, and it is noticeable in this collection that breaks and contradictions in the editors' lineage of aesthetic critics show up when there is less material for them to draw on. Whistler, for example, comes across clearly in his "The Ten O'Clock Lecture" as the despiser of Ruskin and Morris (indeed this splendid speech is conceived in antagonism to the latter: "There never was an artistic period. There never was an Art-loving nation"). The cultural reminiscences by Yeats printed in this anthology alone suffice to make its editorial argument seem extremely simplified. Yeats had to keep his admiration for Hallam and the Pre-Raphaelites to himself when among the Rhymers, though they were united in approving of Whistler and disliking Swinburne and Tennyson.

Finally, any selection of Victorian critical writing will tend to assist an "aesthetic" account of the ideas that prevailed. There is a bias in the mere nature of the discourse (in the sense that "aesthetic criticism" is something of a tautology; an entirely unaesthetic

criticism is not imaginable). And this period the writers on the aesthetic side were conspicuously articulate. The editors say that

the nineteenth century was a particularly rich era of aesthetic speculation . . . Wordsworth and Coleridge set the tone . . . their public lectures and long Prefaces to joint volumes of poetry firmly established the role of the critic as critical commentator on the arts.

This is thoroughly misleading. The key figures in this anthology, in terms of space devoted to them, are Ruskin and Pater, neither of them important artists. Conversely, the most eminent poets of the Victorian era, Tennyson and Browning, were exceptionally reticent about their art. Even if the theme of this anthology is correct, and a *fin de siècle* idea of the arts had a longer, broader history in nineteenth-century England than is usually recognized, a doubt about its significance would still survive: because this tradition was not, on the whole, associated with significant creative endeavour in its day.

## Imports of culture

Jennifer Uglov

JOHN J. CONLON

Walter Pater and the French Tradition

175pp. Associated University Presses. £12.95.

0 8387 5016 8

A glance at the densely packed, highly allusive pages of John J. Conlon's book helps to explain why no comprehensive study of Pater's relationship to French thought and literature has previously appeared in the new wave of Pater studies of the past decade. Critics may have been intimidated partly by the extent and diversity of his interests: "Of the seventy-five prose works . . . twenty dealt primarily with French literature and civilisation", while the remainder "with very few exceptions, contain allusions to French critics, French words, phrases and proper names". The difficulty is that in a short book, arranged chronologically like this present study, many references can receive only the most cursory mention,

while more lengthy treatments, like the analysis of Michelet's influence, or the comparison of Arnold and Pater as interpreters of French culture, are cut short by the need to hurry on to the next stage of Pater's development. One feels like a harassed tourist being marched past ten landmarks in a day, at each of which one could happily spend a month.

The critical problem is further intensified by the fact that "influences" in Pater's prose are notoriously various, cunningly interwoven and often distorted or even misquoted to form a peculiarly Paterian synthesis, an effect well evoked in Billie Andrew Inman's article on "The Intellectual Context" of "Walter Pater's Conclusion". And so, beneath the surface of Pater's text, the mazes hum — Goethe, Renan, Fichte, Hume, Spencer, Tyndall, Hegel, Aristippus, Plato; Morris, Baudelaire. "To extract the French tradition alone may be not only difficult, but also misleading."

Conlon approaches his daunting task with boldness and sensitivity. His interest is threefold: in the French influence on Pater's aesthetic theory and critical method; in his imaginative response to a wider body of French literature and his sense of its relation to English culture; and in his role as a publicist for contemporary French writing. The explication of Pater's intellectual debt to French predecessors in both his criticism and his fiction, is the clearest and most informative strand. The overall approach is exemplified by the lucid, succinct first chapter which demonstrates the eclectic method by which Pater moved gradually towards a coherent critical position in the essays written between 1868 and 1872, taking what interested him from his reading of a range of authors. From Renan, among other suggestions, he took the idea of "the work as surface . . . a myriad of objective data for the beholder's contemplation and active intellectual stimulation"; reacting to Pater's dictum of "race, moment et milieu", he turned to Sainte-Beuve, adopting his method of the *portrait littéraire* as a device for tracing the source of an author's individuality; from Michelet he may have acquired the notion of the Renaissance as a duel, umpired by Nature, between Hellenic serenity and biblical mystery and pathos. There are no startling revelations, and one would like more detailed footnotes on evidence of Pater's reading, for which Conlon simply refers readers to Inman's major study, but by the end one has a new sense of the way Pater's French scholarship penetrated his work.

The book is more controversial when it analyses Pater's response to French literature as a whole. Conlon's thesis is that "France provided Pater with a model of cultural continuity that he considered indispensable to a proper understanding of the Western Tradition, an ideal that joined the Hellenic world to the Renaissance and

both to Romanticism". This loose Romantic tradition embraced the bizarre, irrational elements, the "strength" and "curiosity" which Pater always opposes to classical "sweetness" and "the desire for beauty". It is flexible enough to stretch from Joachim du Bellay to Mérimée, from a medieval *chanson* to *Le Misérable*, reaching its "decadence" in the naturalism of Zola. There is surely, though, a second French tradition, that of independent enquiry in matters of faith, which Pater took from Abelard, to Montaigne's scepticism and Pascal's Jansenism and to minor contemporary writers like Amiel, Feuilleit and Lemaitre. In his fiction these two traditions are linked in the questing character, threatened by an oppressive "culture of emul", and led on not by faith, but, as many critics have noted, merely by hope — "the Great Possibility". Conlon's particular interest in the "Romantic" tradition gives his comments on the fiction a refreshingly individual feel. His five pages on Marjane, for instance, pass rapidly from a view of him as "Emile of the second century" to a forerunner of the existentialist and hero who stands "in the shadows behind the characters of Saint-Exupéry, Camus, even the caricatures in Ionesco and Beckett". The reading of *Inaugural Portraits* is similarly provocative, emphasizing the portrayal of destructive egotism and passion. This interpretation does justice to the energy but not the subtlety of the short fiction, and suffers from a weakness which menaces the whole book, namely an under-estimation of the force of Pater's attraction to both sides of his polemic opposition between romanticism and classicism, materialism and idealism, movement and stillness, Dionysus and Apollo.

The least satisfactory aspect of this interesting study is the estimation of Pater's influence as a popularizer of French culture. The crucial importance of his work is reiterated rather than demonstrated; the reception of French literature in late Victorian England is described in a haphazard manner, and the definition of the Philistine resistance is limited to the review following Pater's review of Fabre in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1869 begins: "A clean, wholesome, French book, like the elusive issue of *Le Journal* really explored afresh and opened like his ambivalent (or, perhaps, disapproving?) attitude to Verlaine's poetry are treated solely in terms of temperament rather than critical tenets."

Walter Pater and the French Tradition is useful, stimulating, not closely textured criticism, and contains a better study of the French influence on Pater, which requires detailed reading of particular texts, than of Pater as a "French intellectual" on his time, which requires charting of movements of taste.

JEAN STAROBINSKI

Montaigne en mouvement. 379pp. Paris: Gallimard. 125fr. 2 07 02247 9

MICHEL CHAILLOU

Domestique chez Montaigne. 277pp. Paris: Gallimard. 85fr. 2 07 02375 3

"He looked upon the self with the eyes of the non-self . . . the 'Essais' are the embodied process of that achievement." "Montaigne touches his greatest heights in passages . . . where he surveys his own activity as the writer of the 'Essais'." An attempt to apply the Lacanian notion of the mirror-phase to Montaigne? A structuralist finding reflexivity wherever he looks? No, only Middleton Murry celebrating the 40th anniversary of Montaigne's birth in 1933 (see "Fifty years on," TLS March 18). Yet the fact that such features have regularly struck readers of the *Essais* as central shows that it is not by some strange perversion of the modern critical mind that Montaigne has become so fashionable in recent years. Certain of the issues one associates with Continental criticism and its Anglo-Saxon by-products are unquestionably already there in Montaigne (the self-consciousness of the writer, the provisional status of his topics, the richness of the interplay between the *Essais* and other texts, the merging of the themes of writing with themes of nature, death, sickness, sex), although shaped by a different historical context and phrased in a very different language. At the same time, a clearer view is now emerging of the problems which have to be solved before a proper critical edition of the *Essais* is established, while a better understanding of the use Montaigne made of the varieties of discourse available to him is making it possible to grasp the nature of the extraordinary series of historical accidents that composed the *Essais*.

When the clans gather to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Montaigne's death in 1992, the moment may well have come to bring together these insights in a new synthesis on the scale of Pierre Villey's *Sources et Évolution*. Meanwhile, Jean Starobinski's admirable *Montaigne en mouvement* joins the handful of books on Montaigne (Friedrich, Tilbaudet, Frame, etc.) which give an intelligent general account of the *Essais*, and makes it superfluous for the non-specialist reader to spend much time on the daunting number of recent books and articles which offer a more partial view.

Although *Montaigne en mouvement* is a thoroughly coherent and well-integrated book, several of its chapters are modified versions of articles which have been appearing over a period of more than twenty years and have already proved seminal in their own right. It was thus conceived at much the same time as *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: la transparence et l'obstacle*, to which it is indeed a kind of sibling: Rousseau and Montaigne, despite some obvious differences, are "linked" by their meditations on the self and its relation to others, on the opposition between nature and "art" or culture, on education, solitude, freedom and happiness, and of course by the fact that Rousseau knew the *Essais* intimately. Starobinski is concerned with discovering the principles which underlie the apparent contradictions and inconsistencies of each writer's imagination; he does not attempt a systematic comparative analysis, but often explicitly nourishes his understanding of Rousseau, and the two books ought really to be read jointly as an exercise in reciprocal elucidation.

The principle which Starobinski catches in a variety of different contexts is: embodying the fundamental movement of Montaigne's thought is a dialectical one. He begins with the philosophical and theological commonplace of the "affinity of appearances": Montaigne constantly reiterates this *topos*, denouncing the hypocrisy and human

artifice of all kinds and thus, it would seem, presupposing the possibility of attaining to the opposite term (truth, nature, essence). But in a second phase — and one should stress that these phases are presented as being logically, not chronologically, sequential — Montaigne perceives that "nous n'avons aucune communication à l'essence", that we are irremediably contaminated by appearance, that our desire for an inward truth that would make us wholly independent of others is always thwarted by the necessity of living in a world of political, social and personal relations. The third phase is that of "la relation maltrisée" (Starobinski's phrase): it is precisely the conscious acceptance of the play of appearances, the perception that there is no escape into a world of essence, which holds the contamination in check and allows the individual to achieve an intellectual and moral purchase on experience.

Stated baldly in this way, the principle may seem both schematic and banal. But any reduction of the *Essais* to a single quasi-philosophical structure will run that risk: Montaigne himself was acutely aware both of his tendency to fall into the commonplace and of his apparently gratuitous and futile attempt to escape it (this is indeed another way of restating the principle itself). In practice, the finess with which Starobinski demonstrates the operation of this characteristic movement in relation to the themes of friendship, death, personal independence, the body, love, self-awareness and public life (a chapter on each) wholly vindicates the enterprise. The dialectic never appears in an aridly schematic form; its terms constantly shift according to the pressures and constraints of Montaigne's imagination. For example, the order of the first two phases may be inverted: in a particularly striking section of his third chapter, Starobinski points to Montaigne's own division of his life into three phases, the first being a state of financial dependence, the second a period of economic autonomy accompanied by a scrupulously careful management of his affairs, the third a sort of nonchalance in which money is spent as it becomes available (the journey to Italy is the paradigm for this third phase). With a hint of irony, Starobinski suggests that this tripartite division of Montaigne's life may be more appropriate than the traditional "stoic-epicurean" schema. Every chapter has such insights: this is one of those rare critical studies that one genuinely wants to read from beginning to end.

It will already be clear that, in its method, *Montaigne en mouvement* represents a late flowering of the Genevan school of literary criticism. The theme of the mask, the analysis of the recurrent configurations of a writer's imagination, the exploitation of what is fundamentally a philosophical frame of reference, characterize not only Starobinski's earlier works but also those of his colleagues (notably Jean Rousset) and of Georges Poulet; to this he has added his own distinctive interest in psychology and medicine. For the English reader, his style will appear as distinctly "Continental", by contrast, for example, with Peter Burke's succinct and pragmatic account of Montaigne's ideas in the *Past Masters* series. Those who have begun to assume that the Genevan manner is becoming outmoded, having been overtaken first by structuralism and then by post-structuralism, may even wonder whether Starobinski's *tour de force* in this instance is not surreptitiously indebted to these later developments. On the one hand, Barthes is mentioned very briefly in the final chapter as one of a series of modern thinkers dealing with problems already central to the *Essais*, while Derrida (unless I've missed a reference somewhere) is totally absent. On the other, questions such as the identity-difference crux, the undermining of the opposition between appearance and essence, and the writer's exploitation of discourses which he claims to reject, are nowadays staples as very much the province of Derrida and his followers: Where, then, does Starobinski stand?

Terence Cave

Part of the answer is that such questions had already been raised in his book on Rousseau, to which Derrida's own reading of Rousseau is clearly indebted: Derrida has at the most enabled Starobinski to develop and consolidate his own topics and his own brand of critical reflection.

Starobinski is aware of the plurality and fragmentation endemic in Montaigne's writing, of the instability of the structures of thought it sketches out, but in the end he remains attached to the Genevan notion of a coherent consciousness within which all the shifts and tensions and apparent paradoxes are meaningfully contained. Unlike Derrida's style, Starobinski's is always elegant and eloquent: accidents, lapses, cracks, incoherences may figure sometimes as its themes but are never voluntarily allowed to undermine the critic's own discourse. And the third phase in the dialectic, although no doubt perceived as a trajectory rather than a fixed state, becomes the grounding in Starobinski's book for an intellectual and moral achievement, rather than (for example) a detour designed to disguise the friction between two incompatible modes of discourse.

Whether or not one wishes that Starobinski had leap-frogged *De la grammatologie* will be a matter of personal preference. But the serious reader who has read Starobinski's *Essais* will find it interesting in the historical dimension of the *Essais*. Starobinski knows the sixteenth century well; he is aware of the extent to which historical change operates at the linguistic level (he comments, for example, on the rare use of the future tense in the *Essais*, associating it with a use of the word *histoire* which excludes connotations of process, progress, futurity); and there is a marvelous chapter — perhaps the most original in the book — on Montaigne's simultaneous suspicion of and dependence on the medical language of his day. But the priority given to individual consciousness and self-consciousness inevitably distracts attention from the character of the *Essais* as a polyphonic cross-section of contemporary texts and voices (Burke, with his no-nonsense history of ideas, provides a useful conspectus of at least some of these). If Starobinski says a good deal more about the intellectual legacy of the *Essais* than about its antecedents, this is no doubt because the complexities of the *moi* are progressively magnified after the *Essais* by Pascal, Rousseau, Nietzsche, Freud and phenomenology. Starobinski recognizes this, but he makes the crucial leap from reflexive and disjunctive uses of the first-person pronoun to the noun form without pointing out that Montaigne never predicated the *moi* in that form. The crucial point, in historical terms, is that the self as an organizing centre is more intermittent and more tentative in the late sixteenth century than a modern reader is accustomed to believe: the miscellany, the post-humanist rewriting of significant discourses from the past, is only just beginning to adumbrate for itself a subject (in the grammatical sense) which will justify its name and find its coherence.

The peculiar status of the *Essais* in this sense is also apparent, for example, in the adoption of a title which is not yet a genre title, although Montaigne may be credited *post hoc* with the invention of the title (if not the genre): it denotes only a groping for something which can never — within Montaigne's horizon at least — be fully grasped. Similarly, in the "Apologie de Raymond Sebond" Montaigne gave European culture a massive subcutaneous injection of sceptical arguments — subcutaneous because those arguments (now written out in the vernacular) have not yet fully declared to Montaigne or his contemporaries their subversive force. Both Starobinski and Burke, in their very different ways, set out judiciously enough the evidence for and against a "subversive" or privately agonistic Montaigne; both leave the reader to decide, while giving a gentle prod in the direction that subsequent history appears to confirm: But is not the desire to settle matters one way or the other itself a source of anachronism? The strangeness of the

manoeuvres Montaigne performs in the "Apologie" ought not to be explained away as bad faith or intellectual incoherence on his part: they indicate, as graphically as his dismissal of Copernicus or his lack of faith in experimental scientific method, the constraints of late sixteenth-century intellectual sensibility. It is the point where fragments fail to stick together neatly that should interest historians of ideas, and the temptation to paper over such cracks should at all costs be resisted.

Starobinski accepts, however, that his perspective is not purely historical: "partant d'une inquiétude moderne, posant à Montaigne, dans son texte, les questions de notre siècle, je n'ai pas cherché à éviter que ce Montaigne en mouvement ne fût aussi bien un mouvement en Montaigne"; he speaks at one point of "ce que le livre de Montaigne nous invite à penser", and his final chapter includes some reflections on the pertinence of Montaigne's thought to a twentieth-century sensibility. For Starobinski, the *Essais* still have a message. He thus brings off the singularly difficult task of grasping the problematic and elusive character of the work while yet preserving the conviction that Montaigne says things, has ideas and values. He would not doubt feel that access to criticism, with its perfectly justifiable emphasis on the provisional nature of Montaigne's themes (or their reversion to themes of writing), has at times come dangerously close to throwing out with the bath-water what for many readers is a very real baby. His book, in the last analysis, celebrates the Montaignian achievement of a *glissement flexible*, a moral and intellectual suppleness which carries with it the possibility (dare one say it?) of happiness.

Montaigne's language, explicitly through its surreptitious rhetorical force, invites the reader to participate in the project it sketches out, to repeat the *essai* in a different context and language. It is therefore hardly surprising that those who write about him find it difficult to avoid repeating or paraphrasing him. As Starobinski says, "il n'est pas facile, pour l'interprète, de ne pas suivre, à distance variable, le sillage de la parole de Montaigne . . . Montaigne provoque le consentement, l'assentiment, la contagion gestuelle, en grande partie par la façon dont il mobilise, chez son lecteur, les pouvoirs du sentir." Starobinski's solution is to concede the difficulty and to construct a "chacotisme", a series of variations on a central Montaignian figure. Michel Chailou's poetic novel *Domestique* uses a wholly different language and offers a quite different image of Montaigne, but he too, through one of his characters, pinpoints the problem: "Les *Essais* dès qu'on y goûte font à jamais de vous leur esclave . . . Le vin sent trop bon, on croit prendre un verre, toute la bouteille y passe, C'est le diable Montaigne."

Chailou evokes the pathos of a history, or legend, precariously attached to a tourist site. Montaigne's famous tower is a building closed once a year so that the "domestics" can clean it, a locus of partly inauthentic anecdotes and historical objects, part of the chateau that survived the conflagration of 1885, a decayed outbuilding in a kind of farmyard, the place where a seventeenth-century descendant of Montaigne wrote an outstandingly uninteresting book, but never quite the trace of the real Montaigne.

This displacement is brought about by allowing the bric-à-brac surrounding the legend of Montaigne to be presented primarily through the fiftful consciousness of the locals who live and work in the chateau and the surrounding villages: chief among these is Alex Lambert, said to be the direct descendant of the promiscuous page Montaigne brought back from Italy. At another level, the ill-focused quest of the Montaigne fanatic Gabriel Lorgeno, who spent his refugee childhood in the area, provides an ironic commentary on the compulsion to visit the shrine: he snugly corrects

the guide on a point of fact, but when he attempts to relive Montaigne's near-fatal riding accident by rolling around in the grass, he only succeeds in making himself feel sick. The memories of these figures (they are too insubstantial to be called characters) are both personal and atavistic, so that the shadows of a many-layered past are interwoven with a fragile present. The novel spans a single day, September 23, 1980, the anniversary of Montaigne's wedding and only a few days after the anniversary of his death; in its interstices, enactments of earlier happenings, from the Hundred Years War via the wars of religion to the Second World War, are briefly glimpsed and form an endless succession of half-familiar gestures.

Time, then, is one of the main themes of the novel. Through devices such as oscillations of tense, parataxis, bewildering juxtapositions and unexplained associations, Chailou recreates in his own terms a Montaignian preoccupation with *le passage* and the discontinuity it inflicts on individuals and their perception of the world. One consequence of this method is the almost total absence of narrative sequence. The "story" of the characters from Montaigne downwards, is fragmented and dispersed; in a few cases, elements of narrative belonging to a given character can be picked out and put together (this isn't a *nouveau roman*), but the novel invites the reader, by its very structure, to resist this temptation and commit himself to *le passage*.

The other main consequence, also Montaignian (although perhaps nourished by phenomenology), is the priority given to sense-experience: the novel begins with a series of graphic, uncompromisingly physical notations (Alex getting up in the morning). It is in obedience to this rule that Montaigne's disappearance from the scene is marked only by a name, some painted rafters, the possible imprint of his behind on a sixteenth-century armchair, and some writings that Alex tries in vain to comprehend. Chailou seems indeed to suggest that the most appropriate response to the *Essais* is to move out of the realm of intellectual reflection, even out of language itself, into the realm of immediate sensation and action.

In this, his novel concurs with Starobinski's notion of a "repli sur le présent" — dans la vie du corps, dans l'ivresse ou l'extase. Both writers display in their very different ways a nostalgia for presence, which is no doubt one of the reasons why they write about, or around, Montaigne. But Chailou and Starobinski, no less than Montaigne, love the detours of language. Their celebration of *oraison au monde* is also inescapably a celebration of literature as a special variety of experience. Chailou's domestics may scorn the tourists and the scholars and be ignorant of all but the most superficial trappings of the legend they serve: they may be less owners of their imaginary life to the imaginative powers of Montaigne's writing.

*Form and Meaning: aesthetic coherence in seventeenth-century French drama*, edited by William D. Howarth, Ian McFarlane and Margaret McGowan (203pp. Amersham: Avebury. £16. 0 86127 216 1) contains fifteen studies presented to Harry Barrow. In it are essays in French by André Stegmann on A. Hardy and by Pierre Larhomas: "Le premier *Cilindré*": notes sur la dramaturgie et le style de Corneille" and Jean Dubu: "Iphigénie, ou la mort acceptée". Odette de Mourgues writes on Chénier, Professor McGowan on *Andromaque*, Professor McGowan on Racine's "Leu théâtral", Professor Howarth on *Les Femmes savantes* and Roy Knight on *André Tom Lawrenson's* title in the "décor simultané": some recent Anglo-Saxon (and other) attitudes", and Robert McBride's "The triumph of ballet in *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*". Corneille's *Le Menteur* is discussed by Christopher Smith, *Tit et Bérénice* by Christopher Gossip, and his brother Thomas Corneille's *Timocrate* by H. Gaston Hall. There are also articles by George Sutherland and Derek A. Watt.

## Kelmscott in fiction

John Batchelor

MICHAEL TIMKO, FRED KAPLAN and EDWARD GUILIANO (Editors)

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Penelope Fitzgerald has said that she writes biographies about people she loves and novels about people she dislikes. As a masterly biographer of Burne-Jones and winner of the Booker Prize for her novel, *Of Shadows*, she is well placed to assess William Morris's "Novel on Blue Paper", the fragment written in 1872 which is published for the first time in this latest *Dickens Studies Annual*. She is right to claim for it considerable force and poetic power. The bored and self-destructive gentleman-parson, Risley, who loathes the beautiful countryside in which he lives — "he turned back again into the house, feeling that less of a prison than the sweet summer garden that led into the fields that led into other fields that led into other fields that led he didn't care where" — is well established, and so are his two sons, John and Arthur, who are two aspects of Morris himself, John vigorous and open, Arthur bookish and sickly. In their contract with Leeger farm — based on Kelmscott, Morris's beloved house in Oxfordshire — and the beautiful Clara Mason, based on Jane Morris, John and Arthur escape from their father's oppression and the novel breaks off leaving both boys in love with Clara; John, the stronger of the two, is heroically preparing to yield her to Arthur.

This theme, the two brothers in love with one woman, reflects Morris's domestic situation; he shared Kelmscott with Rossetti, his friend and partner, and his wife, Jane, who had Rossetti's mistress. In the novel, no one is to blame for this triangular situation; Arthur, the more sensual of the two, is simply unaware of John's pain; their eyes were fixed on him (Arthur) with a tender and anxious look that made the poor lad forget everything else, and they did not notice that John turned away to the horse's head.

Why did Morris not go on with it? It promises to be a fine study of adolescence, a precursor of the first part of *Sons and Lovers* in its vivid portrayal of the boy's psychological and psychological intelligibility. Penelope Fitzgerald suggests that Morris lacked the necessary aggression to treat the subject properly. She recalls a student who asked of Rossetti's relationship with Jane, "Why then did Morris not strike Rossetti?" Her answer is that for Morris "restraint was an absolute duty"; and that he could no more express jealousy and hatred in his novel than he could in his life; he just

could not dislike people enough to write novels about them.

The other pieces in this volume are professional and some of them are distinguished. Marilyn Georgas, in a piece on *Bleak House*, relates Tulkington to the Devil, a "vision of absolute evil", who plays Mephistopheles to Lady Dedlock's female Faust. In this view Lady Dedlock suffers from the Deadly Sin of Sloth — an interpretation of her behaviour which I am persuaded is plausible. There is an able piece on the historical novel and a well-researched discussion of the abuse of linguistics in the period 1840-60, as historical background to Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*; and Robert D. Lund offers some revealing comments on "gentle fictions" in *Little Dorrit*, though he seems a bit obtuse on the novel's technique when he complains of Dickens's "clumsily intruding into the narrative" in his own voice. Robert Garis's discussion of the dramatized narrator of *Little Dorrit* in his book *The Dickens Theatre* ought to have put a stop to complaints of this kind.

The "Novel on Blue Paper", however, is the treat and discovery of this volume. As Penelope Fitzgerald points out, Morris's time-scheme is impossible — its logic requires that Morris writing in 1872 should in due course describe his hero's adventures in the 1890s. "News from Nowhere" indeed — but a bit of ingenuity could respect that somebody will do a *Sandwich* on it.

The book is more controversial when it analyses Pater's response to French literature as a whole. Conlon's thesis is that "France provided Pater with a model of cultural continuity that he considered indispensable to a proper understanding of the Western Tradition, an ideal that joined the Hellenic world to the Renaissance and

both to Romanticism". This loose Romantic tradition embraced the bizarre, irrational elements, the "strength" and "curiosity" which Pater always opposes to classical "sweetness" and "the desire for beauty". It is flexible enough to stretch from Joachim du Bellay to Mérimée, from a medieval *chanson* to *Le Misérable*, reaching its "decadence" in the naturalism of Zola. There is surely, though, a second French tradition, that of independent enquiry in matters of faith, which Pater took from Abelard, to Montaigne's scepticism and Pascal's Jansenism and to minor contemporary writers like Amiel, Feuilleit and Lemaitre. In his fiction these two traditions are linked in the questing character, threatened by an oppressive "culture of emul", and led on not by faith, but, as many critics have noted, merely by hope — "the Great Possibility". Conlon's particular interest in the "Romantic" tradition gives his comments on the fiction a refreshingly individual feel. His five pages on Marjane, for instance, pass rapidly from a view of him as "Emile of the second century" to a forerunner of the existentialist and hero who stands "in the shadows behind the characters of Saint-Exupéry, Camus, even the caricatures in Ionesco and Beckett". The reading of *Inaugural Portraits* is similarly provocative, emphasizing the portrayal of destructive egotism and passion. This interpretation does justice to the energy but not the subtlety of the short fiction, and suffers from a weakness which menaces the whole book, namely an under-estimation of the force of Pater's attraction to both sides of his polemic opposition between romanticism and classicism, materialism and idealism, movement and stillness, Dionysus and Apollo.

The least satisfactory aspect of this interesting study is the estimation of Pater's influence as a popularizer of French culture. The crucial importance of his work is reiterated rather than demonstrated; the reception of French literature in late Victorian England is described in a haphazard manner, and the definition of the Philistine resistance is limited to the review following Pater's review of Fabre in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1869 begins: "A clean, wholesome, French book, like the elusive issue of *Le Journal* really explored afresh and opened like his ambivalent (or, perhaps, disapproving?) attitude to Verlaine's poetry are treated solely in terms of temperament rather than critical tenets."

Walter Pater and the French Tradition is useful, stimulating, not closely textured criticism, and contains a better study of the French influence on Pater, which requires detailed reading of particular texts, than of Pater as a "French intellectual" on his time, which requires charting of movements of taste.

## Complexities of the moi







